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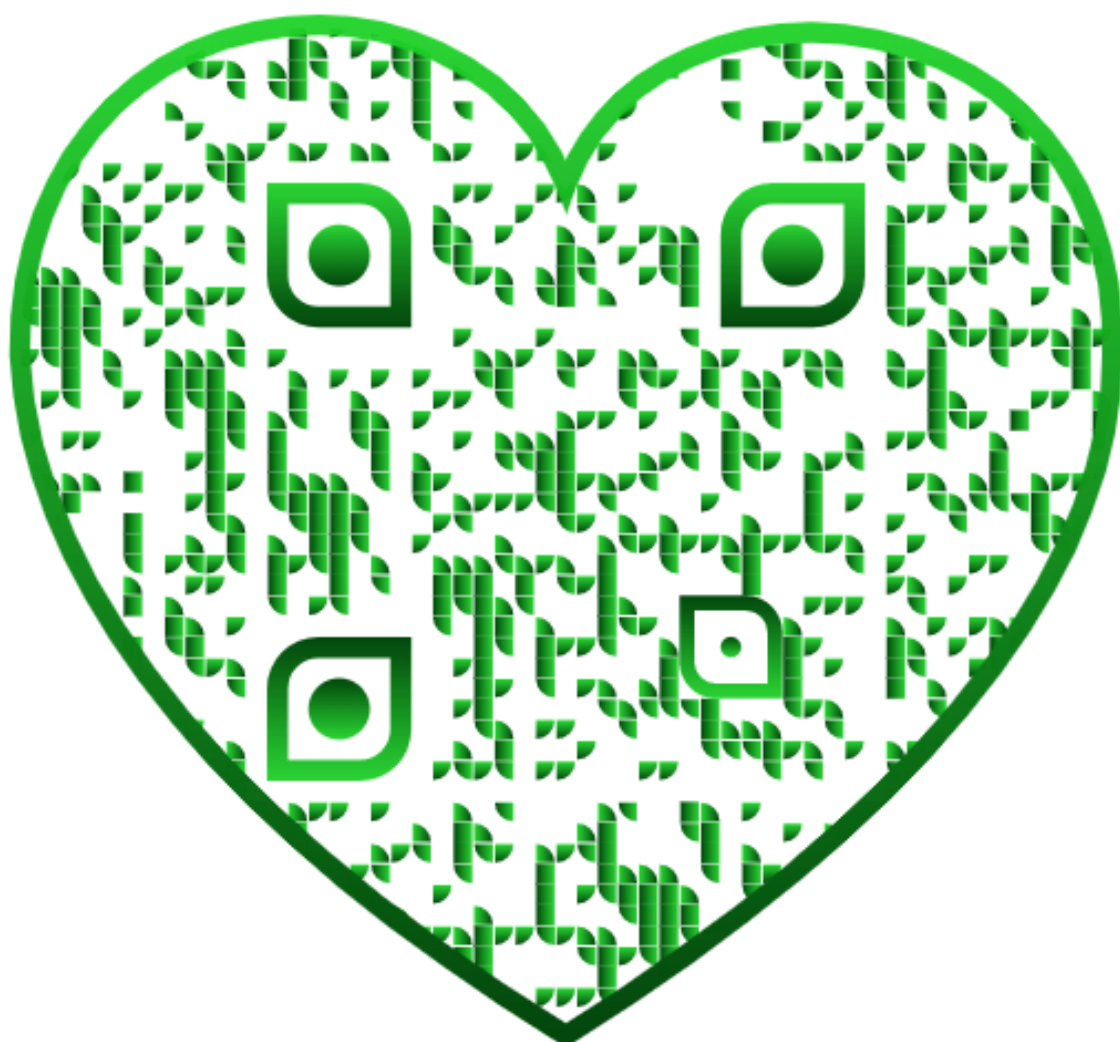
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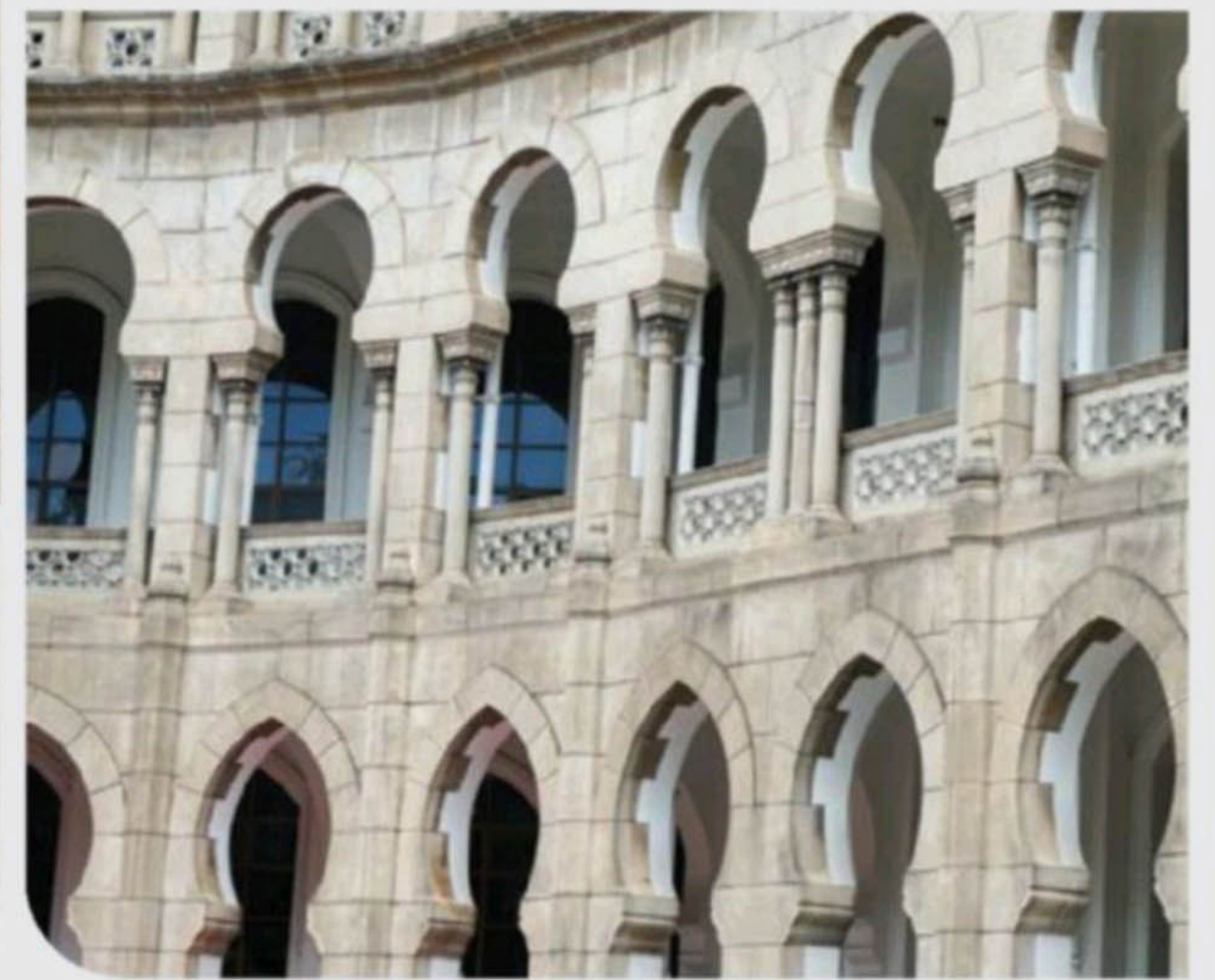
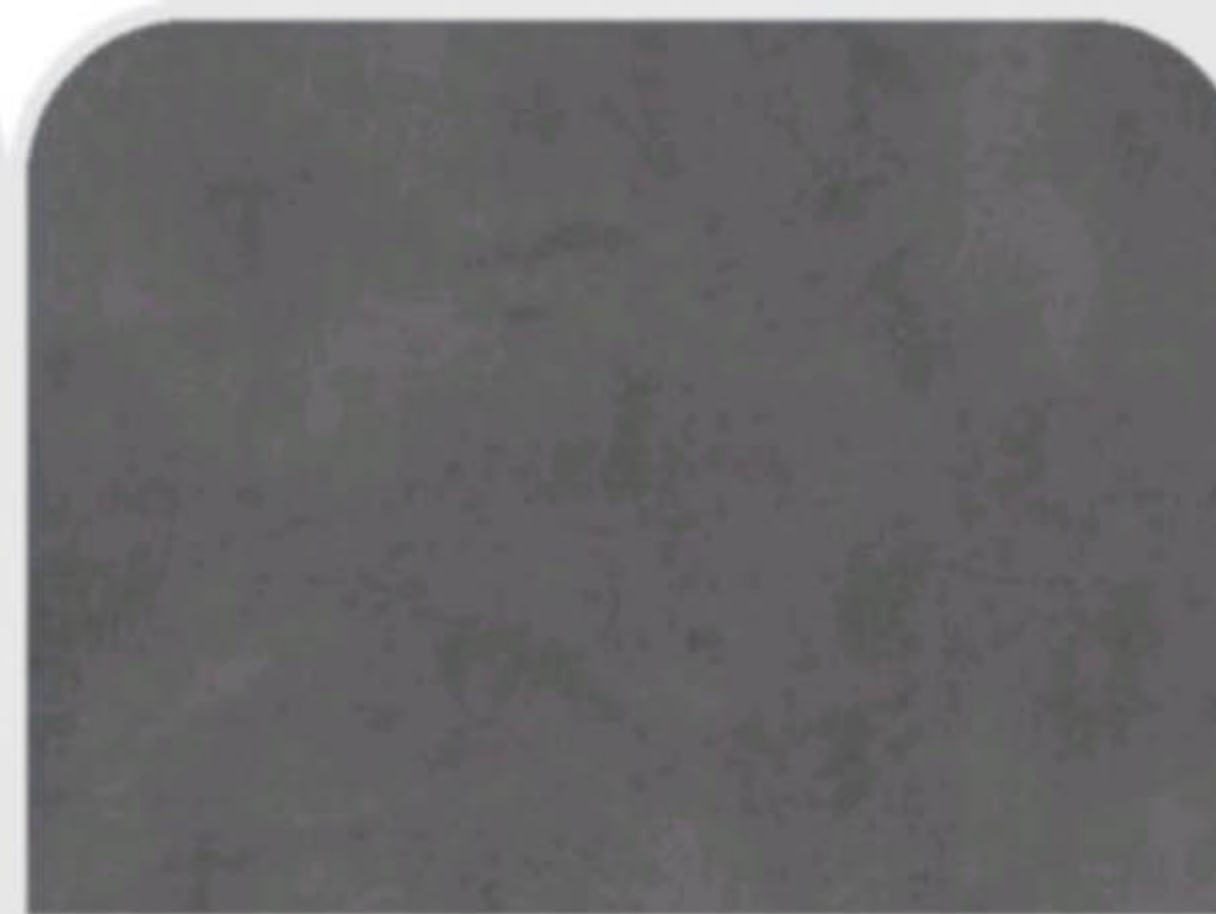
HARDESH AND MONICA CHAWLA, ESSENTIA ENVIRONMENTS





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This collection brings depth and durability to both interiors and façades with its earthy tones and cement-like finishes. Drawing from techniques that once built civilisations, it bridges heritage and innovation through materials that evoke the strength and beauty of stone and concrete. In essence, Mason Mark is more than a surface — it's a salute to the craftsmen who built our world and a canvas for architects shaping tomorrow.



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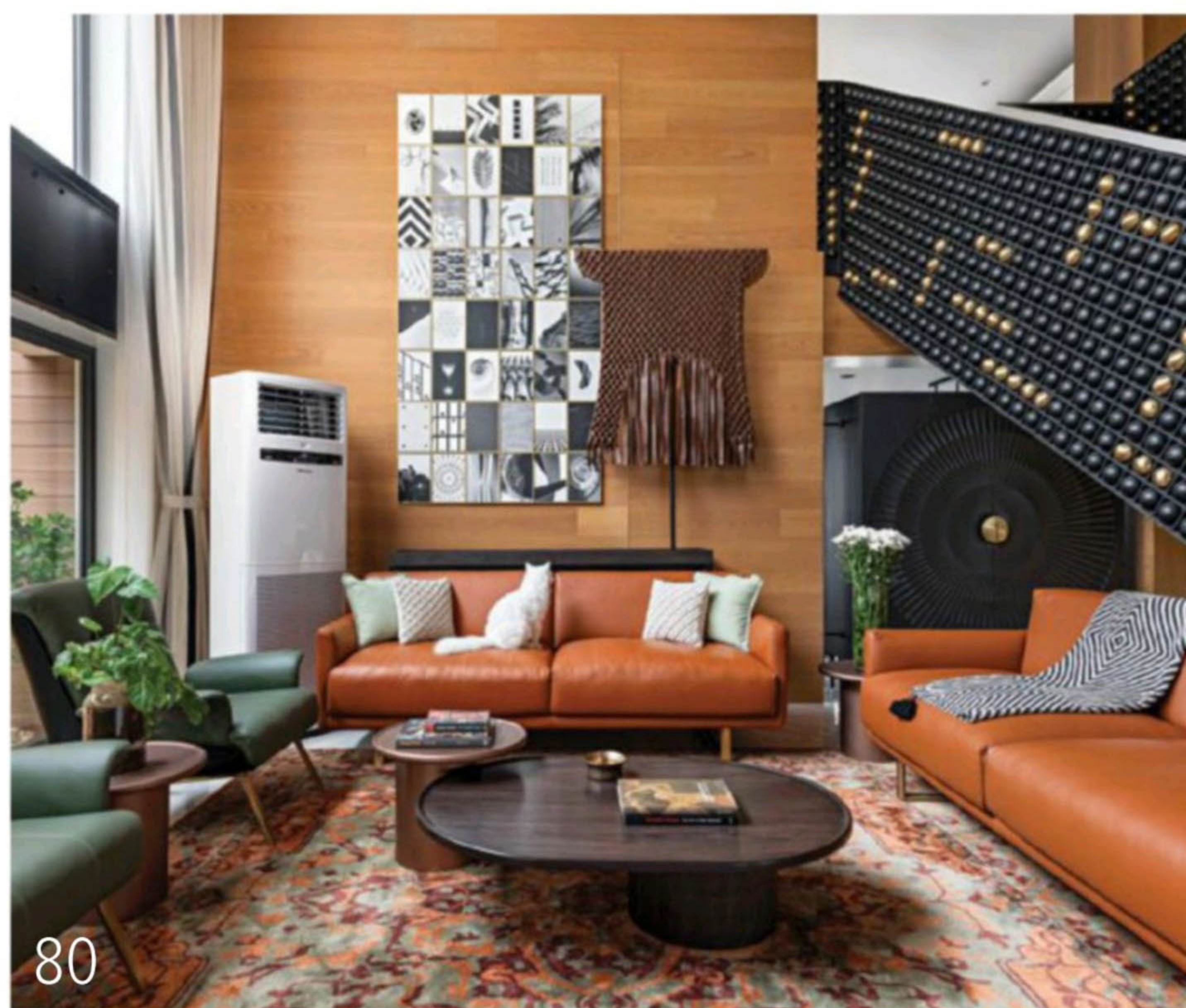
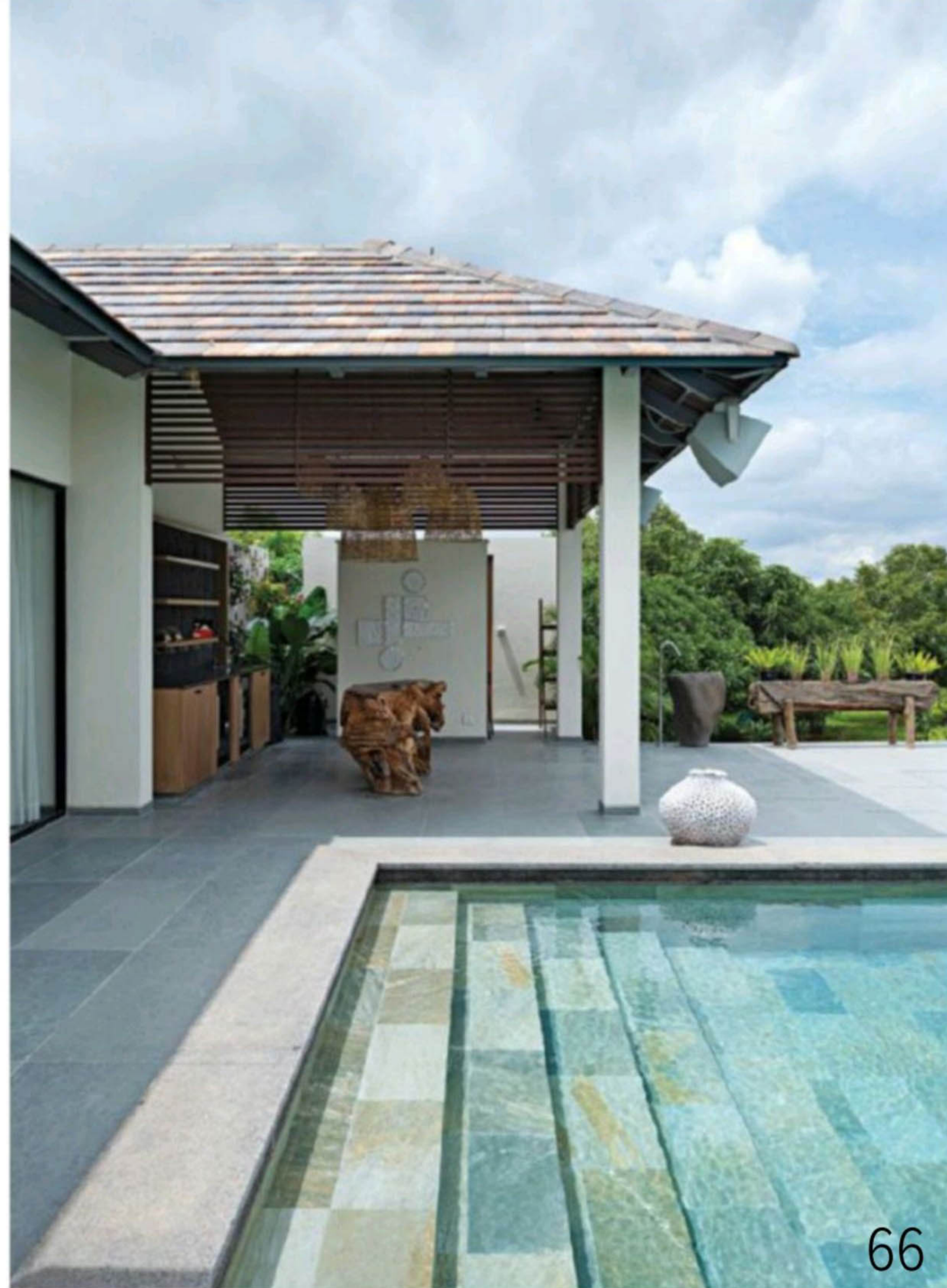
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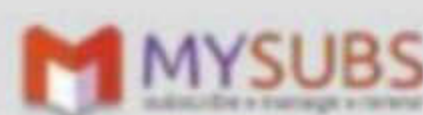
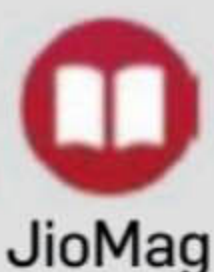


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is the primary condition
for design.”*

—CHARLES EAMES



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ON THE COVER:
Monica & Hardesh Chawla

PHOTO CREDIT:
MEETESH TANEJA

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“I prefer drawing to talking.
Drawing is faster, and leaves less room for lies.”
—**LE CORBUSIER**

India’s design community stands at a pivotal juncture—where time-honoured traditions converge with bold new trajectories of innovation, and where creative practice is no longer confined by discipline or domain. What we’re witnessing is a profound shift: designers today are not just responding to change—they are shaping it. Through a sustained ethos of experimentation and inquiry, they are crafting new methodologies, and nurturing interdisciplinary collaborations that challenge and expand the very definitions of design excellence. The result is a living, breathing ecosystem—one that both reflects and redefines the aspirations of a country imagining a design-led future.

At the forefront of this evolution are Monica and Hardesh Chawla, our cover personalities for this Issue. As founders of Essentia Environments, their journey is emblematic of the broader shifts within the industry. Over the past two decades, they’ve cultivated a practice rooted in craftsmanship, versatility, and a distinct aesthetic voice. The recent launch of Essentia Home marks more than a foray into retail; it signals a commitment to scale, accessibility, and the ongoing redefinition of what “Make in India” can mean in the luxury design landscape.

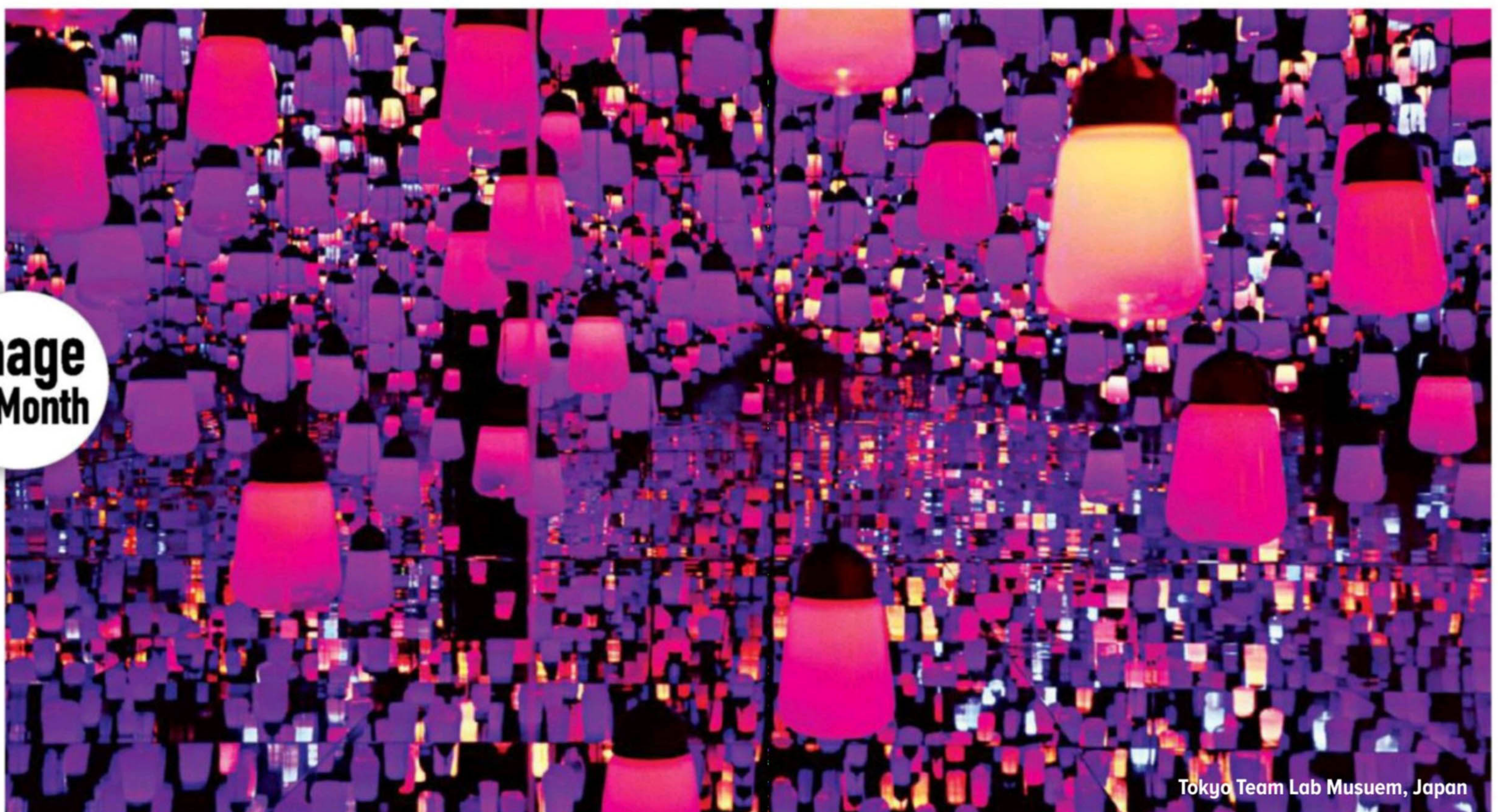
There’s so much happening in the world of design right now—it’s as exhilarating as it is expansive. Every week brings a new studio, a new material innovation, a fresh take on design storytelling. It’s a challenge to keep up—but one we relish. With each Issue, we strive to bring you the most compelling stories, the sharpest insights, and the creative voices that are shaping tomorrow.

Thanks for being on this journey with us.

Happy Reading!

(Seema Sreedharan)
Editor

**Image
of the
Month**



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What's making waves in architecture, interiors and beyond?
The future is unfolding, and we're here to catch it first

Compiled by Ankita Rathod

At Method Delhi, 13 Emerging Artists Ask: What Happens When We Fracture?

New Delhi – There's tension in the air—and Method is holding space for it. *Formation & Fracture*, curated in collaboration with alumni from the IMMERSE Fellowship by Somaiya Vidyavihar

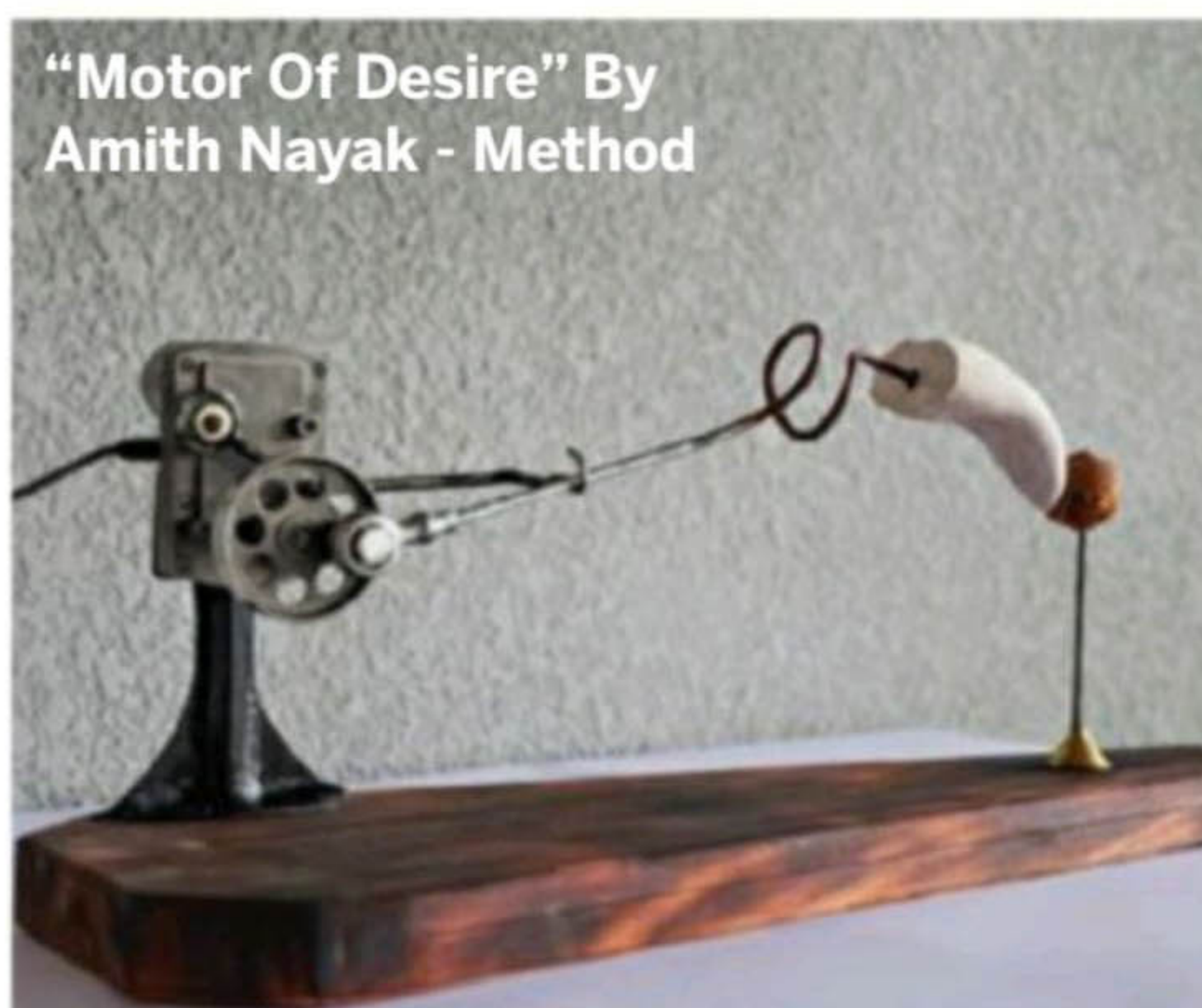
PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Adarsh Palandi, Richa Arya, Shikha Soni, Hasan Ali Kadiwala, Gaurang Naik, and more.

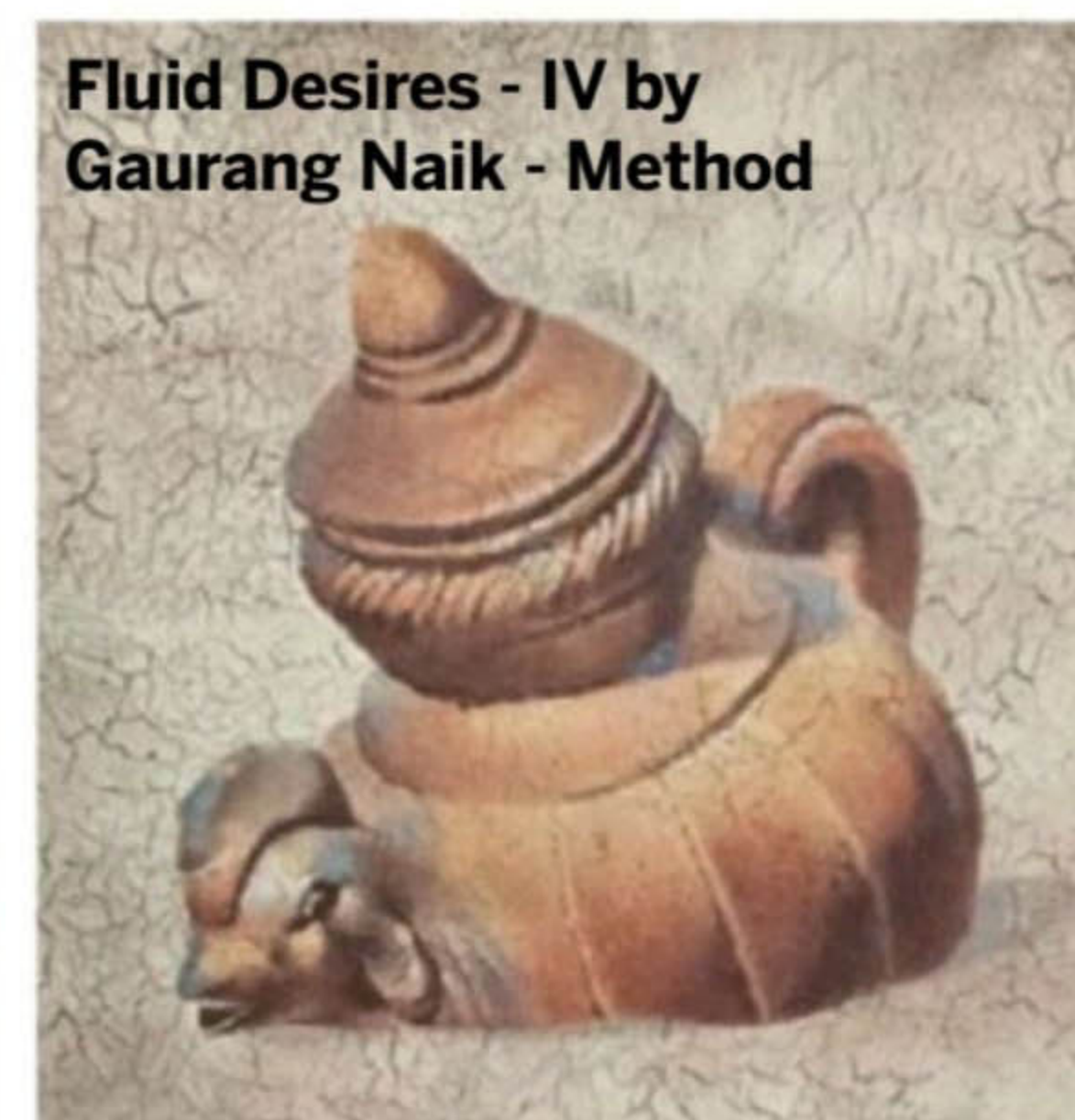
University, brings together thirteen early-career artists exploring the dualities of growth and breakage.

Scheduled to run until 3 August 2025 at Method Delhi, each work holds a contradiction—fragility and strength, silence and rupture, decay and

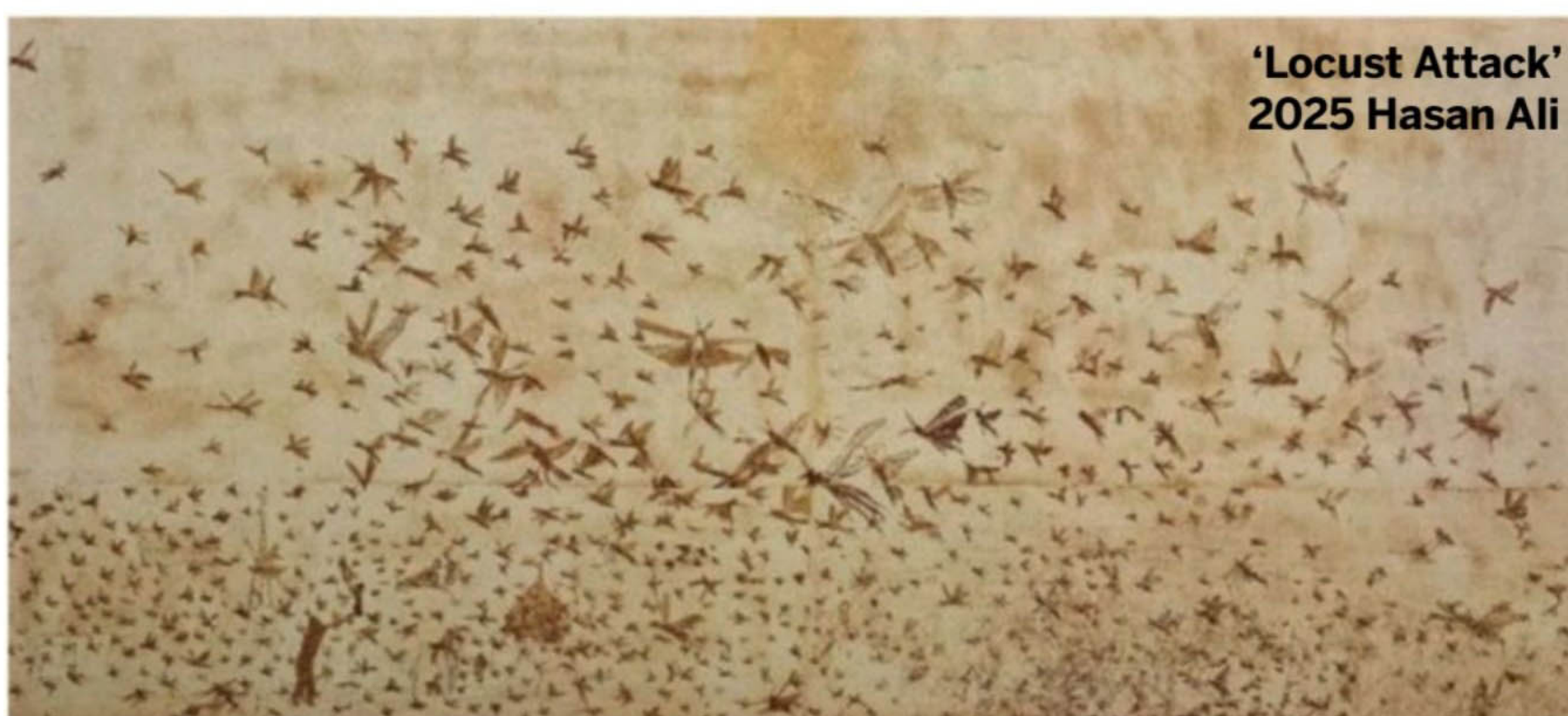
emergence. From site-specific interventions to deeply personal pieces, the exhibition investigates how identities, bodies, and systems are shaped, layered, and inevitably disrupted.



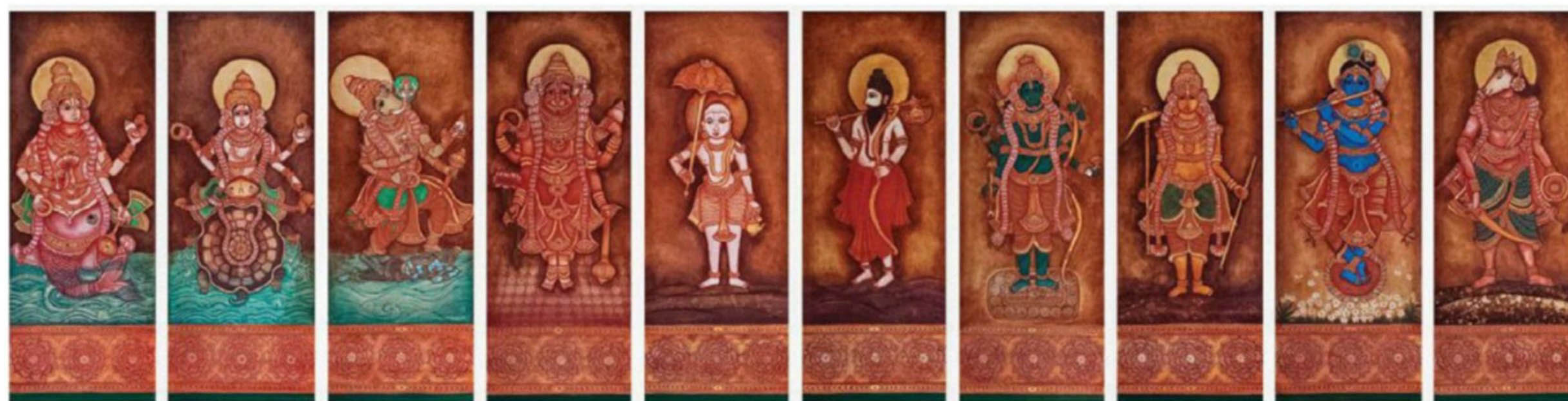
"Motor Of Desire" By Amith Nayak - Method



Fluid Desires - IV by Gaurang Naik - Method



'Locust Attack' 2025 Hasan Ali



Dashavatara — Acrylic on Canvas (48"x18" each - Set of 10 Painting)

VOICES at Jehangir Art Gallery Amplifies Global Synergy Through Art

Mumbai – From Kerala mural traditions to Uzbekistan's figurative abstraction, *VOICES* brings 26 artists together in a powerful exhibition curated by Uma Nair. Presented by Bespoke Art Gallery (Ahmedabad), the group show unpacks themes of identity, mythology, climate, conflict, and culture—through paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and mixed media. On view until at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai from 16–24 July 2025.

Highlights include *Hoshruha*, a lyrical composition by Muzaffar Ali; Arzan Khambatta's thought-provoking sculptures; and Arpitha Reddy's vibrant Dashavatara series rendered in traditional Kerala mural style. International names like Timur D'Vatz, Jesús Curia, and Gillie & Marc lend the show a global edge.

IN THE CURATOR'S WORDS

"There is an inner search in every artist—for significance between tradition and contemporaneity, between communication and expression."

—Uma Nair

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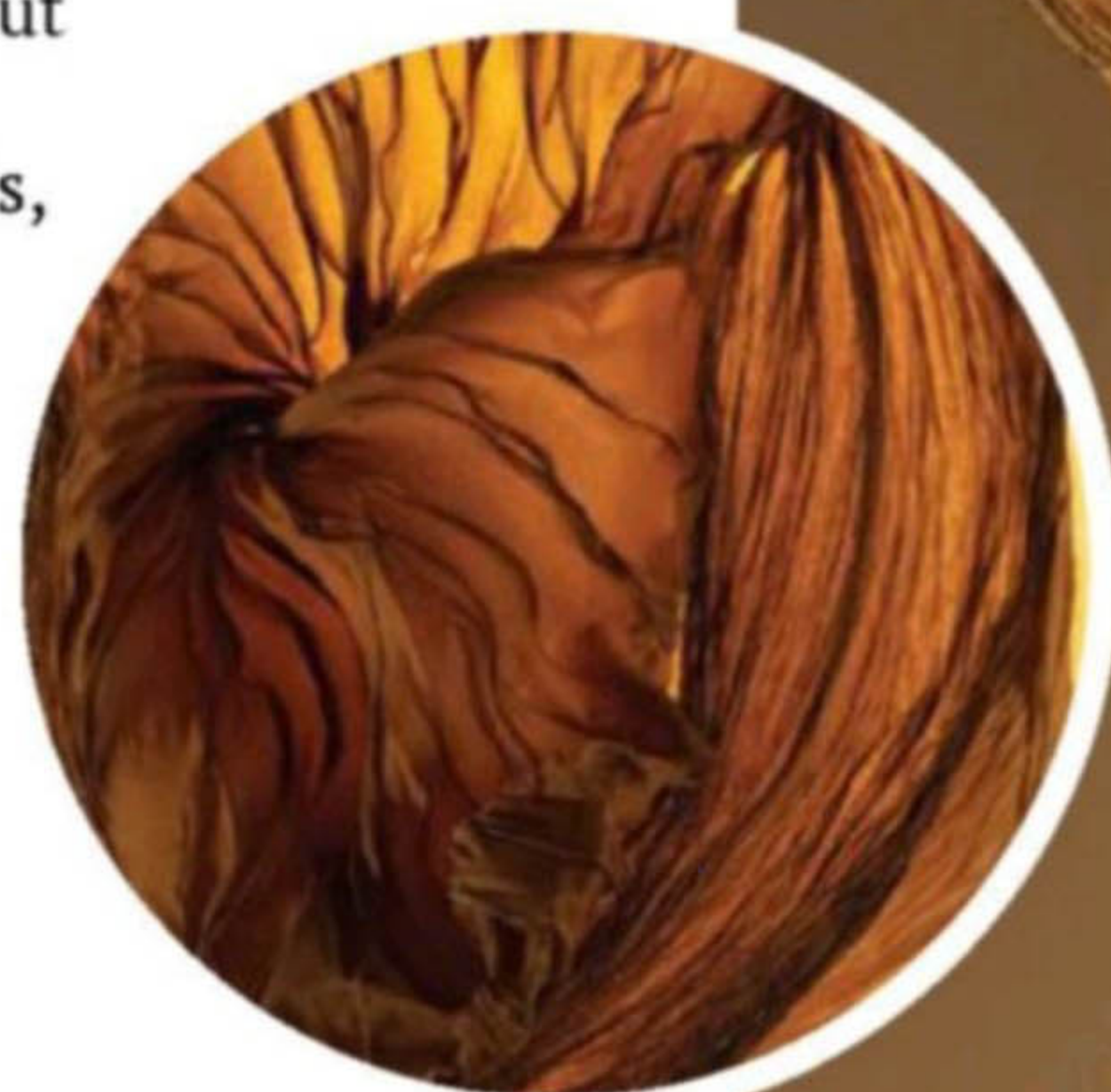
Oorjaa's Aeris Channels Stillness Into Light

Bengaluru – Inspired by the suspended hush just before a seed takes flight, Aeris by Oorjaa is a pendant light that feels more like sculpture than fixture. Crafted from handmade paper using waste banana fibre, tethered with copper wire, the piece evokes the early stirrings of germination—when potential hangs in the air, weightless and infinite.

Its delicate shell glows from within, revealing layers and textures that feel rooted in nature yet elevated by design. Aeris belongs in the quiet corners of life: a bedroom that doubles as a sanctuary, a slow-living nook, a yoga den touched by morning sun. The philosophy is biophilic, but not in trend alone—it's the result of Oorjaa's decades-long commitment to natural materials, handcraft, and circular design.

BEHIND THE BRAND

Founded by Jenny Pinto, Oorjaa has been reshaping India's material conversation since 1998—long before “eco-conscious” became a buzzword. From water hyacinth to quarry dust, they transform what's discarded into light forms full of feeling.



Beruru's Harp Chairs Are the Outdoor Icons We Didn't Know We Needed

Bengaluru – Beruru—everyone's favourite garden lifestyle brand—has dropped a new collection that brings serious groove to outdoor living. The *Harp Chair Collection* is a tactile symphony of rope, metal, and colour, wrapped around sculptural silhouettes that sit somewhere

between tropical daydream and Bauhaus revival.



A+D LOVES

Their riot of colour and quiet comfort—a rare combination in outdoor furniture.

Each chair is handwoven, cushioned, and surprisingly architectural—flashes of berry red, indigo blue, and

jungle green are balanced by soft curves and cane-inspired openness. They're lightweight in spirit but solid in presence. Made for patios, balconies, or that indoor corner that wants to feel like the outdoors, these chairs remind us that joy can be ergonomic too.





Dastoori Outdoor Bar Serving



Dastoori Outdoor Single Seater Sofa

Dastoori by Orange Tree x MuseMART Redefines Rituals in Outdoor Living

Jodhpur x Mumbai – After their successful *Andaman* series, Orange Tree and MuseMART reunite for a new collection that honours memory, heritage, and emotional design. *Dastoori*, drawn from the Urdu word ‘dastur’ (custom or ritual), is an outdoor furniture line that reads more like architectural poetry. Think handcrafted medallions, rust-proof metal, mosaic tabletops, weather-resistant upholstery, and daybeds with detachable canopies. Designed to host everything from languid afternoons to lively evenings, each piece is functional yet evocative, conjuring images of ancestral courtyards, shaded porches, and stories passed across generations.

IN THEIR WORDS

“It’s a collection that blends nostalgia with refinement seamlessly,” says Gaurav Jain, Orange Tree. MuseMART’s Jasem Pirani and Huzefa Rangwala add, “We wanted to reinterpret traditional craftsmanship for a younger, design-conscious audience.”



Dastoori Outdoor Day Bed

Schon Doorways Launches Monsoon-Ready Aluminium Casement Windows

India – While most of us romanticise the rain, architects know the truth—monsoon wreaks havoc on poorly sealed openings. Enter *Schon Doorways*' latest launch: a premium range of aluminium casement and sliding windows that blend monsoon-proof

engineering with sleek urban design.

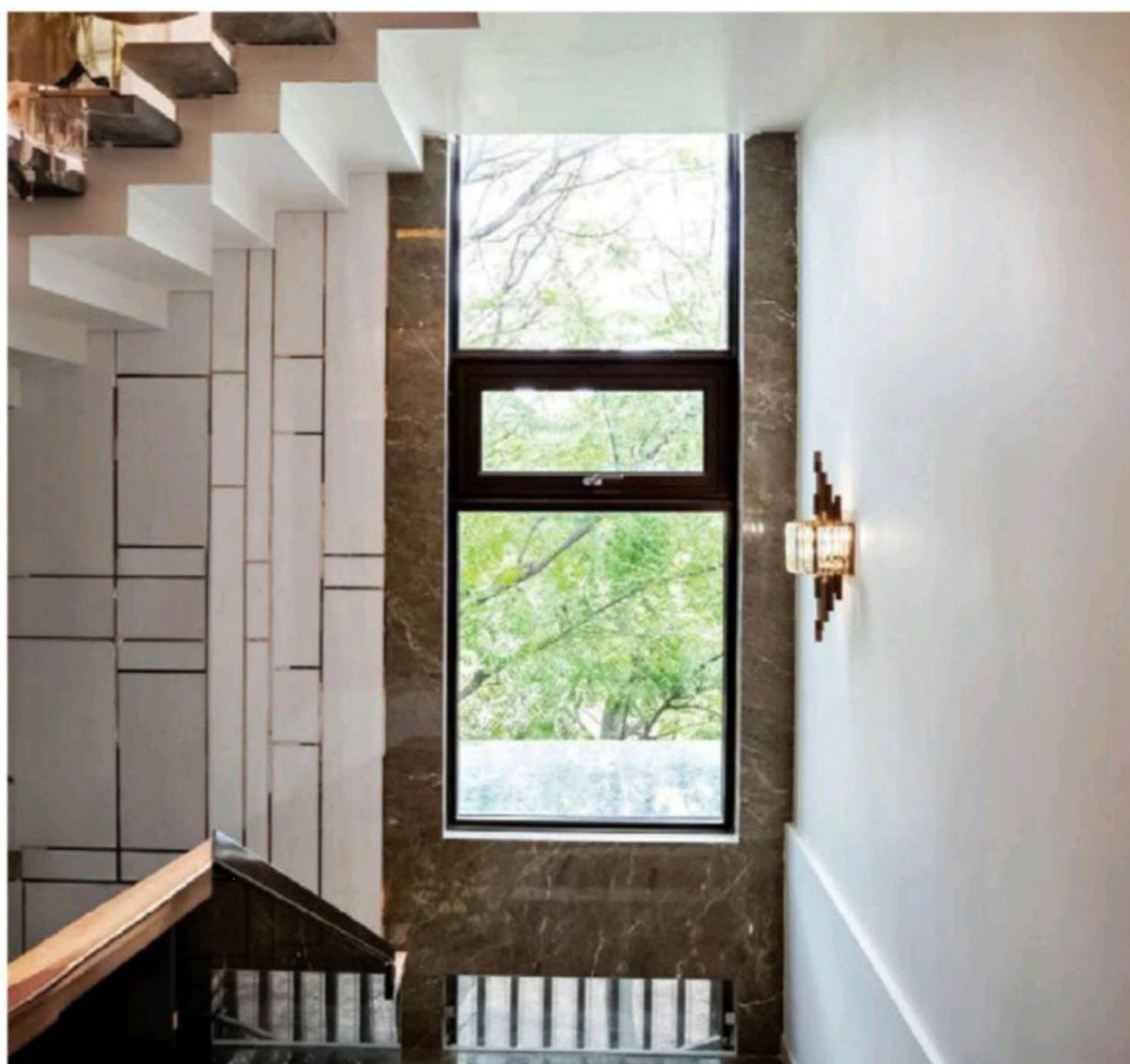
Founder Ajay Balakrishna says, "We craft lifestyle solutions—not just doors and windows."

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or double track formats, the ultra-slim profiles are equipped with tilt-and-turn hardware, flyscreens, anti-collision strips, and insulating tempered glass—offering solid defence against wind, water, bugs, and noise.



Häuser's New Dining Set Is Made for Monsoon Moods

Delhi NCR – Bringing alfresco elegance to the everyday, *Häuser* introduces the *Senzai Dining Table* and *Nabi Chairs*—a weatherproof pairing designed for both indoor calm and outdoor chaos. The table features minimal lines, sculptural legs, and earthy tones like deep green and grey stone. The chairs are wrapped in UV-resistant rope with gently curved backs that feel more like lounge seating than dining duty. This isn't just garden furniture. It's high-end, high-durability design made to stand up to Indian weather without sacrificing aesthetic restraint. Suitable for terraces, balconies, sunrooms—or wherever you want the outside to feel like inside.



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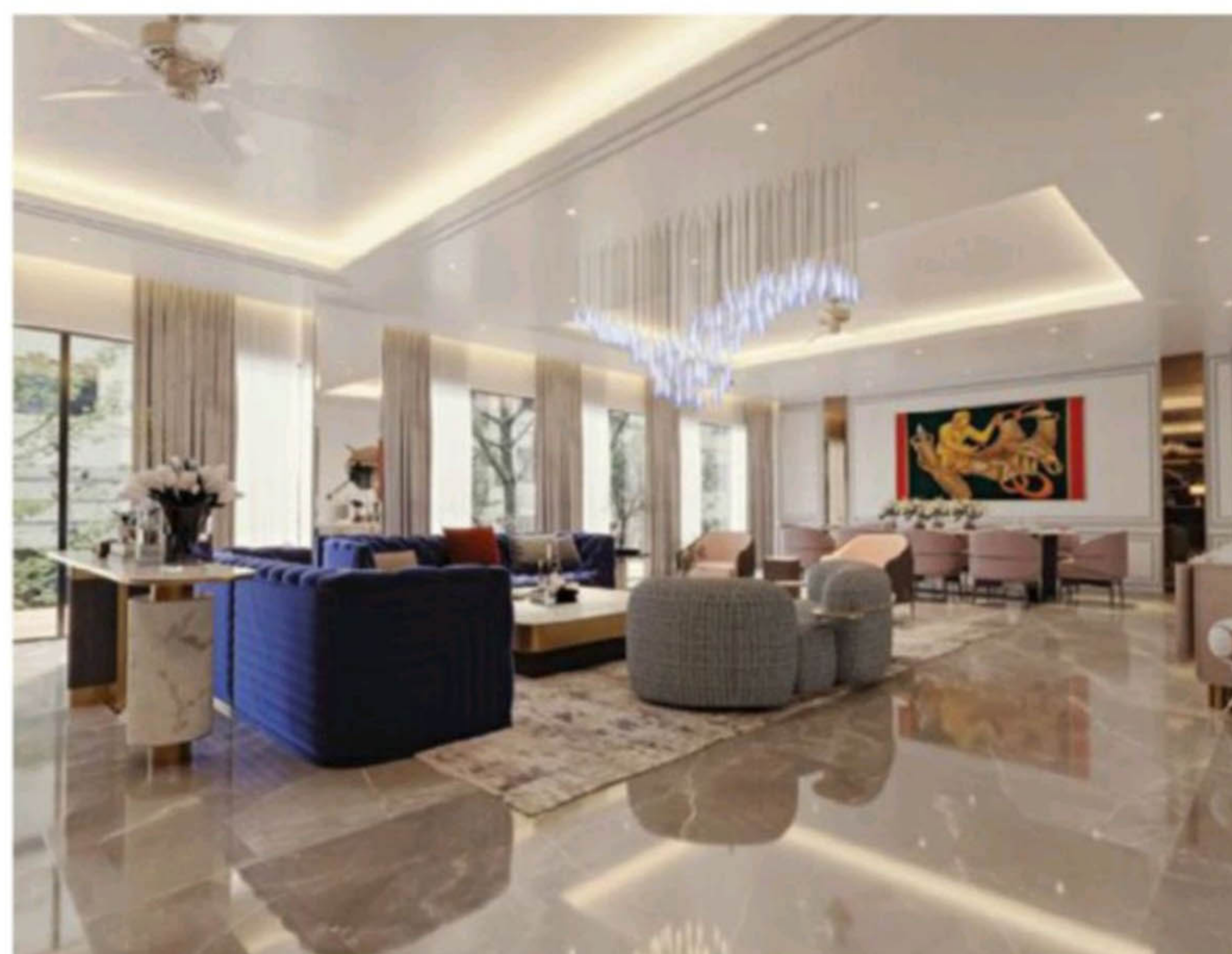
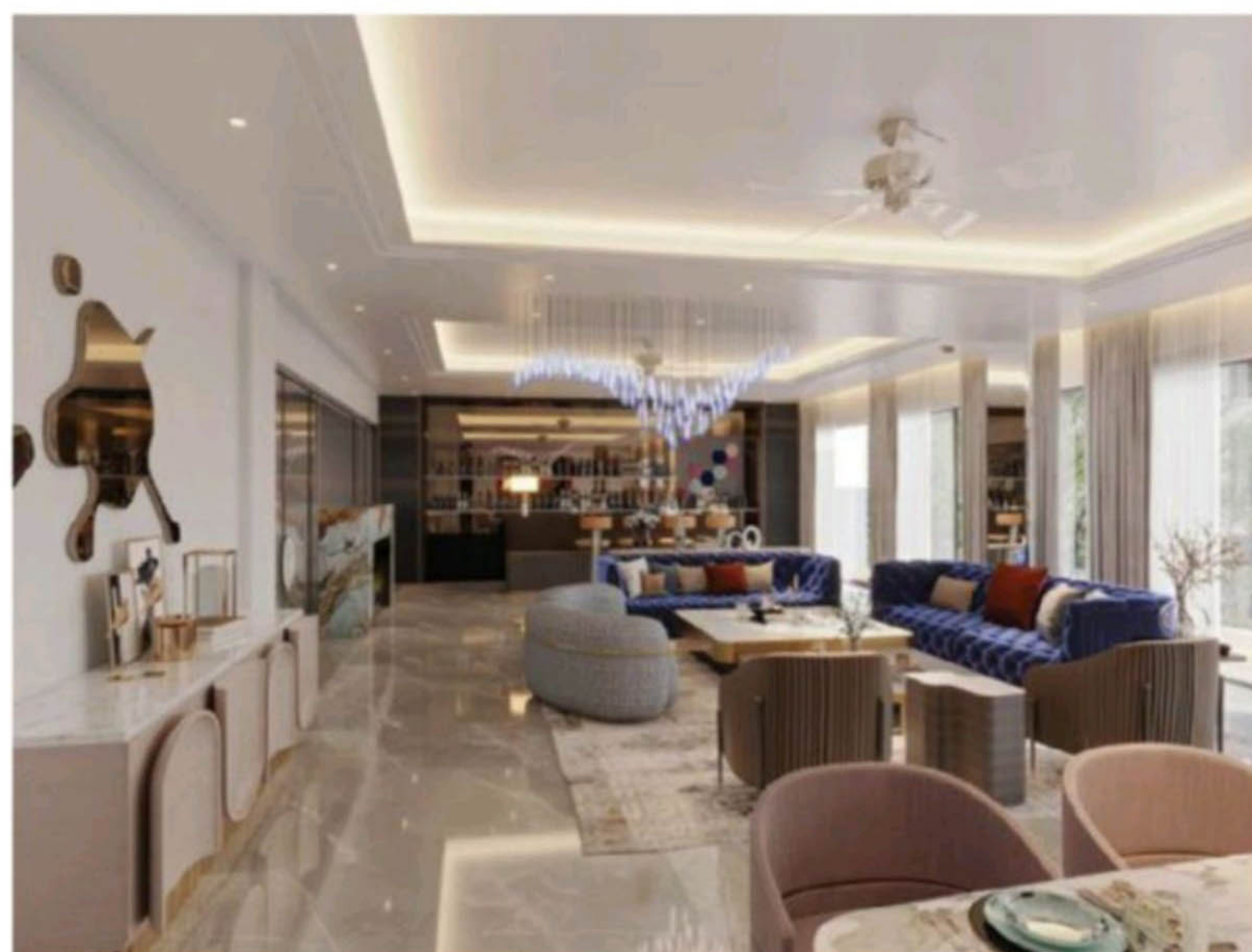
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Attico Homes Layers Colour, Comfort, and Character in a Maximalist Living Room

New Delhi – If beige fatigue had a remedy, it would be this living room by Attico Homes. Rich in visual texture and packed with statement elements, the space juxtaposes soft neutral walls with electric bursts of colour—think jewel-toned seating, expressive artwork, and sculptural coffee tables that double as conversation starters. The vibe is elevated eclecticism—every object tells a story, every hue is intentional. The lighting is ambient, the lines are playful, and the personality is unmistakably bold. Founder-driven and boutique in scale, Attico’s work is known for walking the tightrope between design maximalism and livable ease—and this new room is a perfect balancing act. ✚



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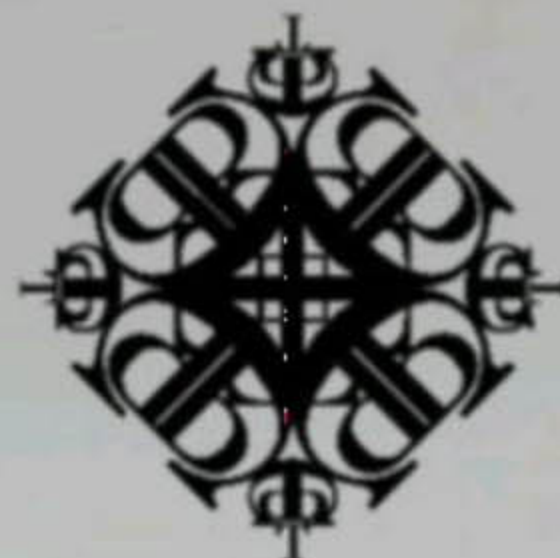
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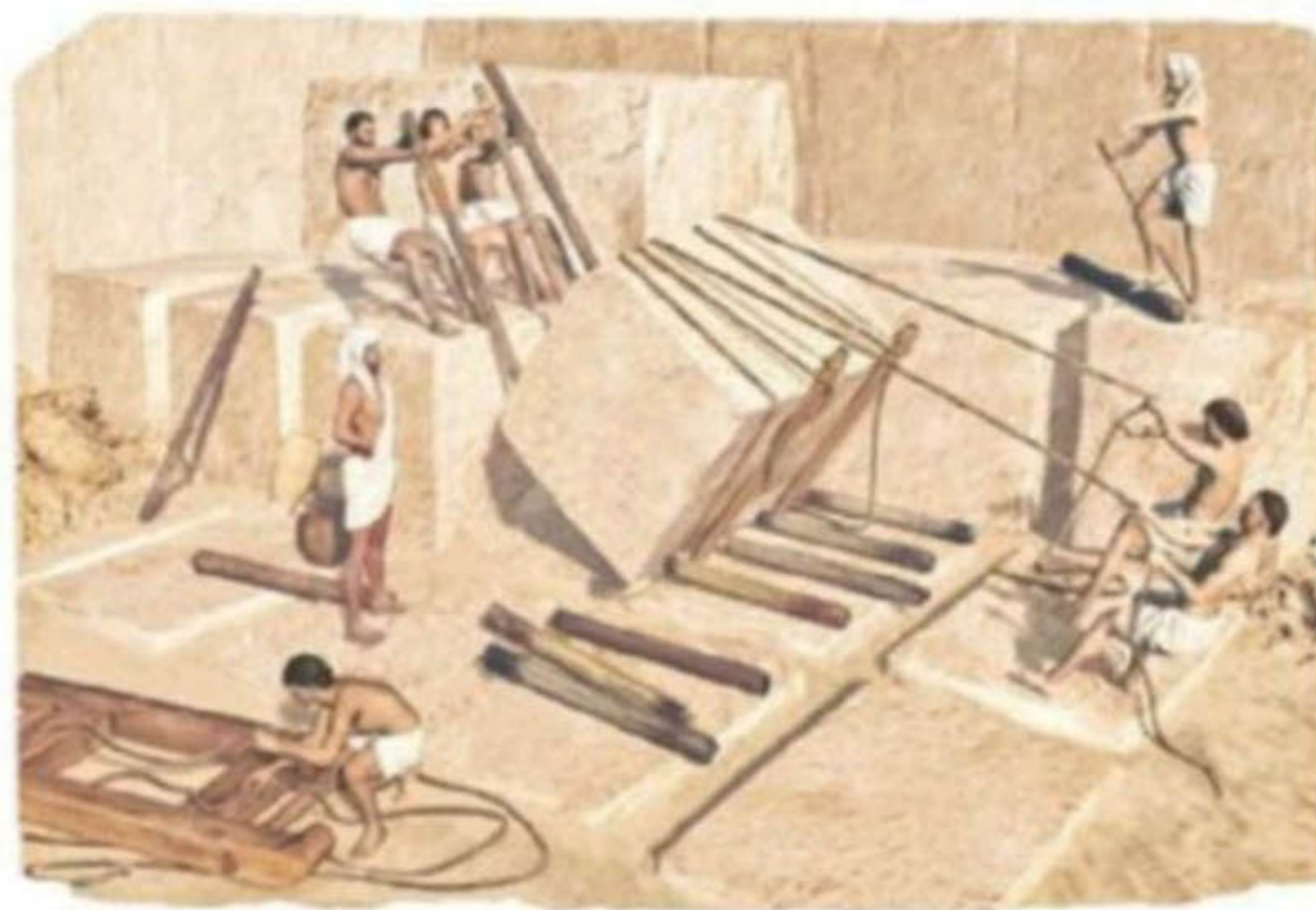
ALUDECOR MASON MARK: INDIA'S FIRST CONCRETE-FINISH ALUMINIUM COMPOSITE PANEL

This innovative product seamlessly blends the durability of aluminium with the aesthetic appeal of concrete, offering a unique solution for architects, designers, and builders

For centuries, masons have shaped civilisations - laying stones, carving stories, and building legacies. Their work may not be signed or staged, but it's felt in every arch that holds and every monument that endures. With Mason Mark, Aludecor pays tribute to these silent creators through a cutting-edge ACP collection that captures the timeless soul of masonry.

Rooted in tradition yet crafted for the future, Mason Mark reimagines the raw beauty of concrete using Aludecor's Three-Coat Raw Tech Paint System, delivering textured, matte-finished panels that blend strength with understated elegance. Available in six historically inspired shades - Roman Wall, Florence Wall, Bruges Wall, Giza Wall, Athena Wall, and Yorkshire Wall - the series celebrates global architectural heritage while offering refined design options for modern interiors and facades.

What sets Mason Mark apart is not just its aesthetic authenticity but the intention behind its creation. Designed in response



to long-standing demands from the architecture community, it offers a surface that performs - and communicates. It's a material that doesn't just wrap structures; it reflects stories of resilience, culture, and craftsmanship.

More than a design evolution, Mason Mark addresses sustainability too. Unlike cement-based alternatives, ACPs have a lower carbon footprint and high recyclability, making them a smarter, greener choice for the built environment.

Continuing Aludecor's journey of honouring craftsmanship - from blacksmiths (Rugged Metal) to potters (Earthcoat) - Mason Mark salutes masonry's enduring legacy. As Marketing Head Gautam Saraswat notes, "Mason Mark was born from direct conversations with architects. It's designed with purpose, heritage with innovation."

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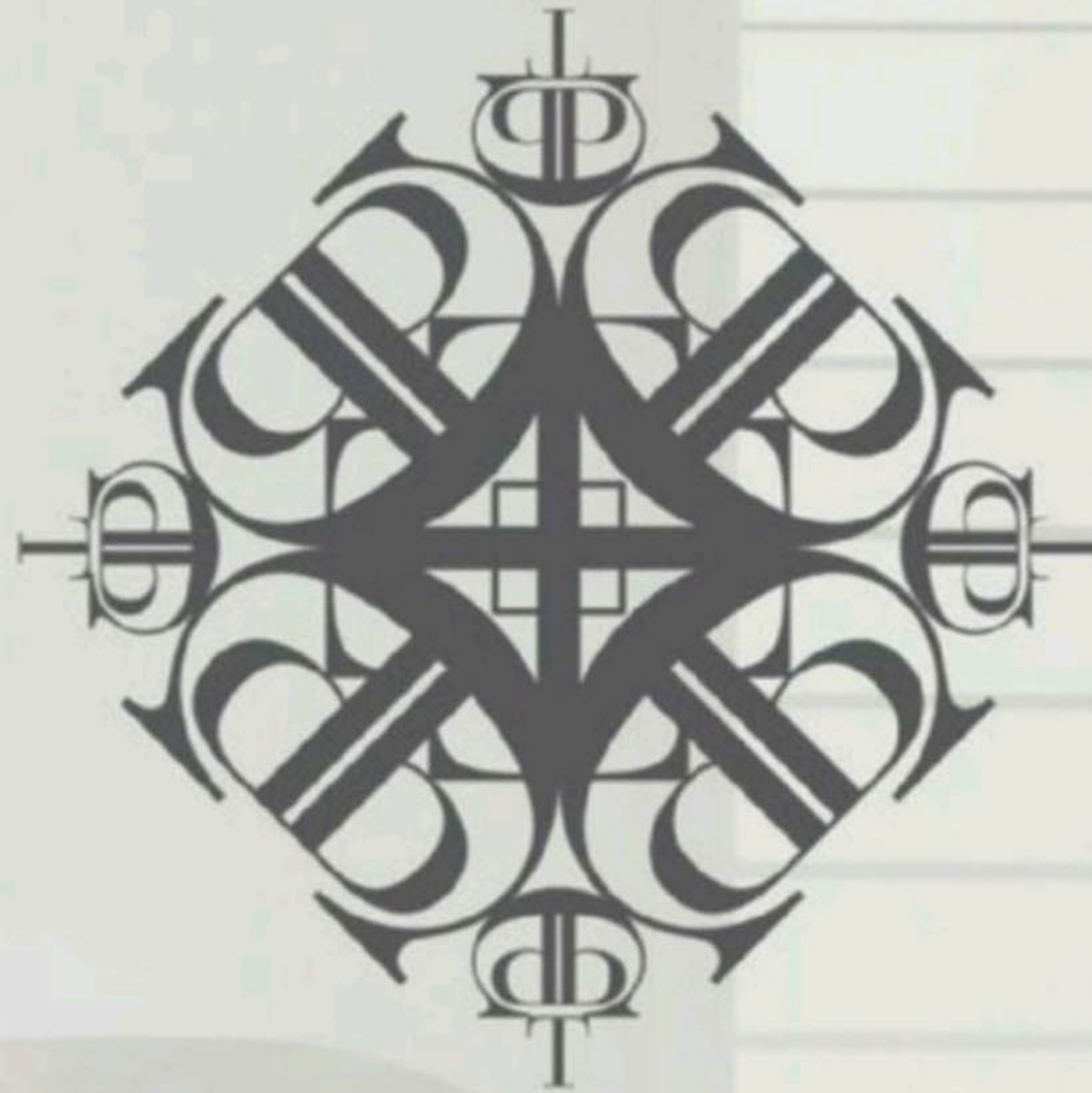
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SPECTA PICKLEBALL OPEN

Breaks the Mould of DESIGN CULTURE

What began as a pastel quartz debut turned into a courtside spectacle. Specta Quartz Surfaces' inaugural pickleball tournament served up more than just sharp rallies—it brought India's top architects and designers together for a summer of spirited play, style-forward camaraderie, and a quietly revolutionary product launch

By Ankita Rathod





The Azure Knights clinched the championship title with flair, team spirit, and some smashing serves

In a city where design often meets deadlines and site visits, something unexpected took centre stage this summer: the crisp pop of a pickleball. For a few exhilarating weeks, this sound became the new rhythm of Mumbai's architecture scene. The occasion? The inaugural Specta Pickleball Open: Design Maestro—a celebration of camaraderie, craft, and colour, curated by Specta Quartz Surfaces.

Rather than host a traditional launch or showroom walkthrough, Specta did something different. They turned sport into storytelling. By inviting 16 leading names in Indian architecture and design to the court, the brand fostered more than just competition—it created connection. Collaboration, a term so often discussed in the context of design studios and creative briefs, found a new, tangible expression here—on the court, through laughter, rallies, and real-time camaraderie.





The Specta Pickleball Open wrapped with a high-energy celebration at Cesar Kitchens

A COURT OF CREATIVES

The tournament roster read like the design world's red carpet. From Ali Hyder Shaikh of Architect Hafeez Contractor to Rahul Menon of Studio TAB, Rusha Kapasi of Rukap Designs, JJ&A's Karaan Jambusarwala & Suzan Banajee, SMA's Shahen Mistry, AS Architect's Ankit Shah, and A+D's own Sonal Das —each brought their own design philosophy and paddle game to the court. Shah called the event “a fantastic initiative” that brought designers together not just on the drawing board but in a refreshingly active way. Menon described the experience as “a breath of fresh air,” while Mistry called it “more than just a tournament—it was about bonding, cheering each other on, and making amazing memories.” Das reflected on how the idea of collaboration, often spoken of in theory, came alive in the most literal and joyful way.

Accentuating the mix, Husain Jariwala, Designer's Group, Tejasee and Janhavi Damania of Pink Octopus, Amar and Zill Jhaveri of A to Z Designs, Arti Kapadia (DWG), Danesh Rustom (Melfra Designs) noted that while designers often connect over work, here they connected as people. Tejasee and Janhavi noted that sense of ease and fun reminded them of why they love the field in the first place. Danesh Rustom, Melfra Designs appreciated the thoughtful pastel-inspired team themes—saying the quiet confidence of the colours spoke volumes. And Shilpa Kabra, TheDesignBox called the tournament



Finishing as the spirited runner-up of the tournament, The Lavender Smashers team

“surprisingly addictive,” praising the platform for encouraging skill—“just of a different kind.” “That soft, muted green is such a rare find in quartz surfaces,” added Kabra, referring to Mint Mirage. “It’s subtle, fresh, and exactly the kind of tone I’m always hunting for but rarely get.

“What a smashing end to Season 1 of the Pickleball Tournament for Architects and Designers, hosted by Specta Surfaces! From epic rallies to endless laughs, it was about bonding, cheering each other on, and making amazing memories. I’m absolutely loving Specta’s Mint Mirage — it brings a calming, serene vibe to any space.”

—SHAHEN MISTRY, SMA



Team Mirage Gladiators embodied the spirit of quiet focus and team chemistry—balancing fun with finesse in every rally

“The Specta pickleball tournament was a great stress buster and a perfect excuse to take a break from hectic work life. Loved meeting fellow architects and designers, forming new bonds and friendships. The pastel collection stands out—Mint Mirage is my favorite! Soothing, neutral, and truly “Ever-green.”

—ALI HYDER SHAIKH, *Architect Hafeez Contractor*



In between points and paddle swings, the real magic happened—through laughter, camaraderie, and off-court connections

THE FINAL RALLY

All camaraderie aside, competition is a language designers understand well. After weeks of professional coaching and hard-fought preliminary rounds, the tournament culminated in a finale that was nothing short of electric. The four captains—Ali Hyder Shaikh (Mirage Gladiators), Karaan Jambusarwala (Gulmarg Gliders), Shahen Mistry (Lavender Smashers), and Husain Jariwala (Azure Knights)—led their teams with palpable determination.

Ultimately, the Azure Knights, led by Designers Group’s **Husain Jariwala**, clinched the win. **“The drive to execute a vision, to push for perfection, is something we all live by in our profession. Specta gave us a new medium for that drive. To compete like this with our peers—and to win—was an unforgettable experience. It’s a powerful reminder that the spirit of creation and the spirit of competition come from the same place,”** Jariwala noted, trophy in hand.



Seema Sreedharan, Editor, *Architecture+Design*



“Specta’s new quartz collection has truly transformed kitchen design—no more dull or overly bright choices. My favourite? Gulmarg Pink—elegant, soothing, and full of creative potential without ever being too much.”

—SUZAN BANAJEE, *J&A*

Named after one of Specta’s most-loved shades, the Gulmarg Gliders brought style, spirit, and a whole lot of heart to the court

CRAFTING SPECTACULAR STORYLINE

Specta’s approach marked a new chapter in brand storytelling—one that prioritises community, conversation, and creativity as much as product performance. The initiative was spearheaded by Manoj Chabria, who leads business across Maharashtra and the UAE, and Tanveer Shah, business development manager. For Specta, the idea of collaboration wasn’t just talked about—it was activated. Together, they translated the brand’s ethos into something that could be felt—not just seen.

The competitive energy was elevated by the presence of Seema

Sreedharan, editor of Architecture+Design magazine, who moderated the event with sharp insight and grace. By creating a platform for authentic connection and spirited competition, Specta positioned itself not just as a manufacturer of surfaces, but as a cultural peer in the design world. The seamless integration of the Pastel Poise launch was more than clever marketing—it was a sophisticated, authentic conversation starter. Perhaps the most influential brands of our time are those that understand their role is to foster the very culture of creativity and collaboration itself. The game has changed. And Specta, quite admirably, continues to hold serve.



“How the idea of collaboration, often spoken of in theory, came alive in the most literal and joyful way.”

SONAL DAS, *Director – Editorial and Brand Solutions, Architecture+Design*



Beyond the blueprint: Design Luminaries conquer the Pickleball Court



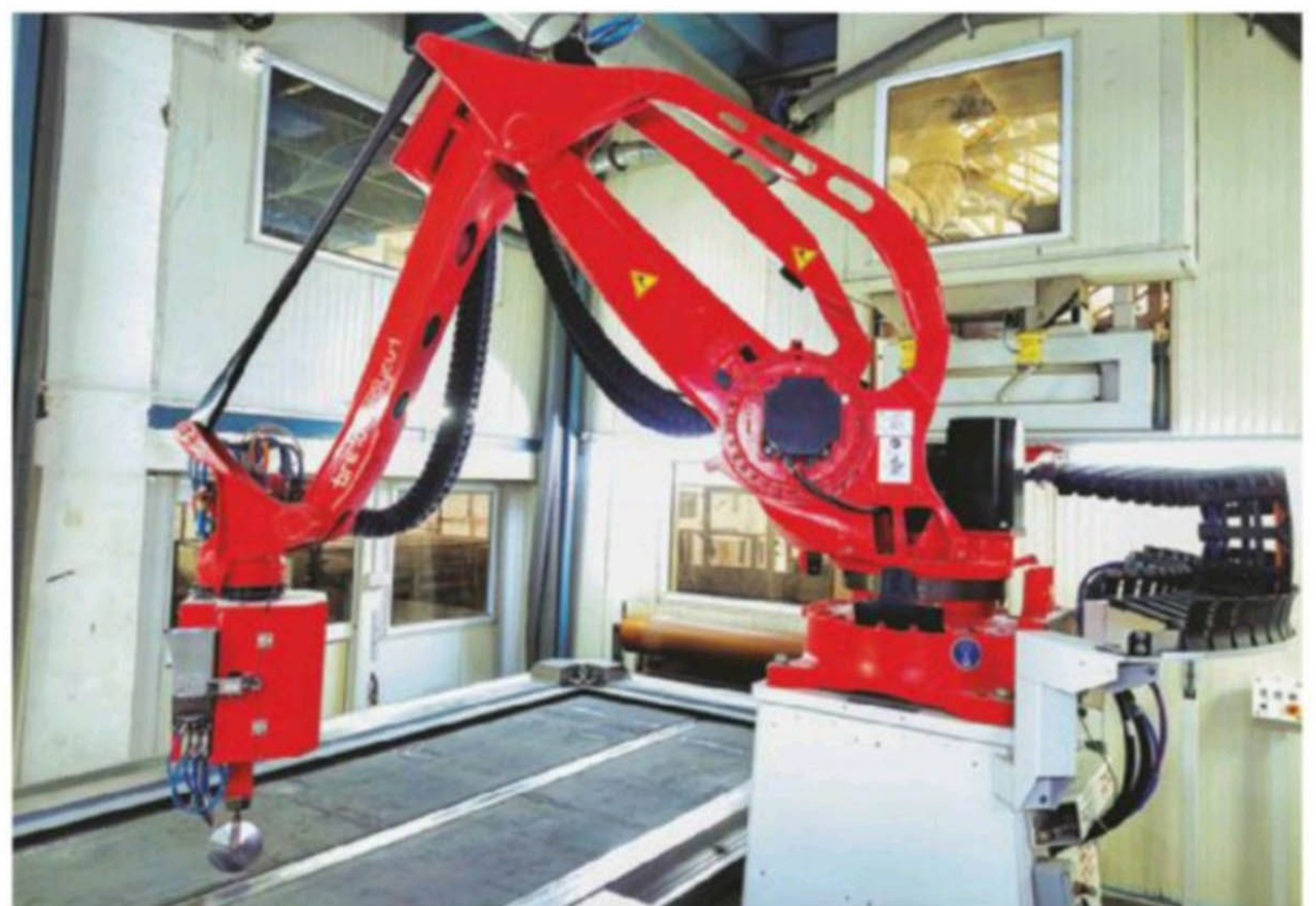
Ankit Jain: The visionary founder sculpting Specta's legacy in luxury surfaces

“The playful spirit of pickleball finds its refined counterpart in our Pastel Poise quartz, where tranquil hues invite you to create spaces that are both beautiful and a joy to live in.”

ANKIT JAIN, *Founder & Managing Director, Specta Quartz Surfaces*



Where scale meets precision: Specta's state-of-the-art manufacturing excellence



Specta's advanced robotics by Breton Technology, perfecting every surface

THE BRAND BEHIND THE SERVE

At the centre of this unlikely crossover is Specta Quartz Surfaces—a force in India's luxury materials space. The brand is the luminous creation of ARL Infratech Ltd., a Rajasthan-based company with a formidable legacy in the building materials industry, supplying cement and construction materials across India for decades.

With Specta, they brought their industrial credibility and technical prowess into the design spotlight.

At the helm is Ankit Jain, Founder and Managing Director of Specta Quartz Surfaces—a third-generation entrepreneur who identified a

critical gap in the Indian market: the need for a homegrown brand that could not only match but rival international players in both quality and cost. His game-changing move? Investing in Italy's Bretonstone technology—the global gold standard in engineered quartz.

This decision propelled Specta into the upper echelons of the global surface market. Their state-of-the-art plant in Jaipur—powered by solar panels and committed to a zero-waste water policy—reflects a brand that places equal emphasis on sustainability and scale. Today, Specta produces durable, hygienic, NSF-certified quartz surfaces that are equally defined by performance and poise.



Lavender Crest: The subtle masterpiece at the heart of modern living



Mrs. Gauri Khan, Celebrity Interior Designer, Reimagining the World with Pastels



“This pickleball tournament, buzzing with modern energy, perfectly mirrors the vibrant yet serene spirit we've captured in our ‘Pastel Poise’ quartz collection, designed for today's dynamic Indian homes.”

—**MANOJ CHABRIA**, *Specta Quartz Surfaces*

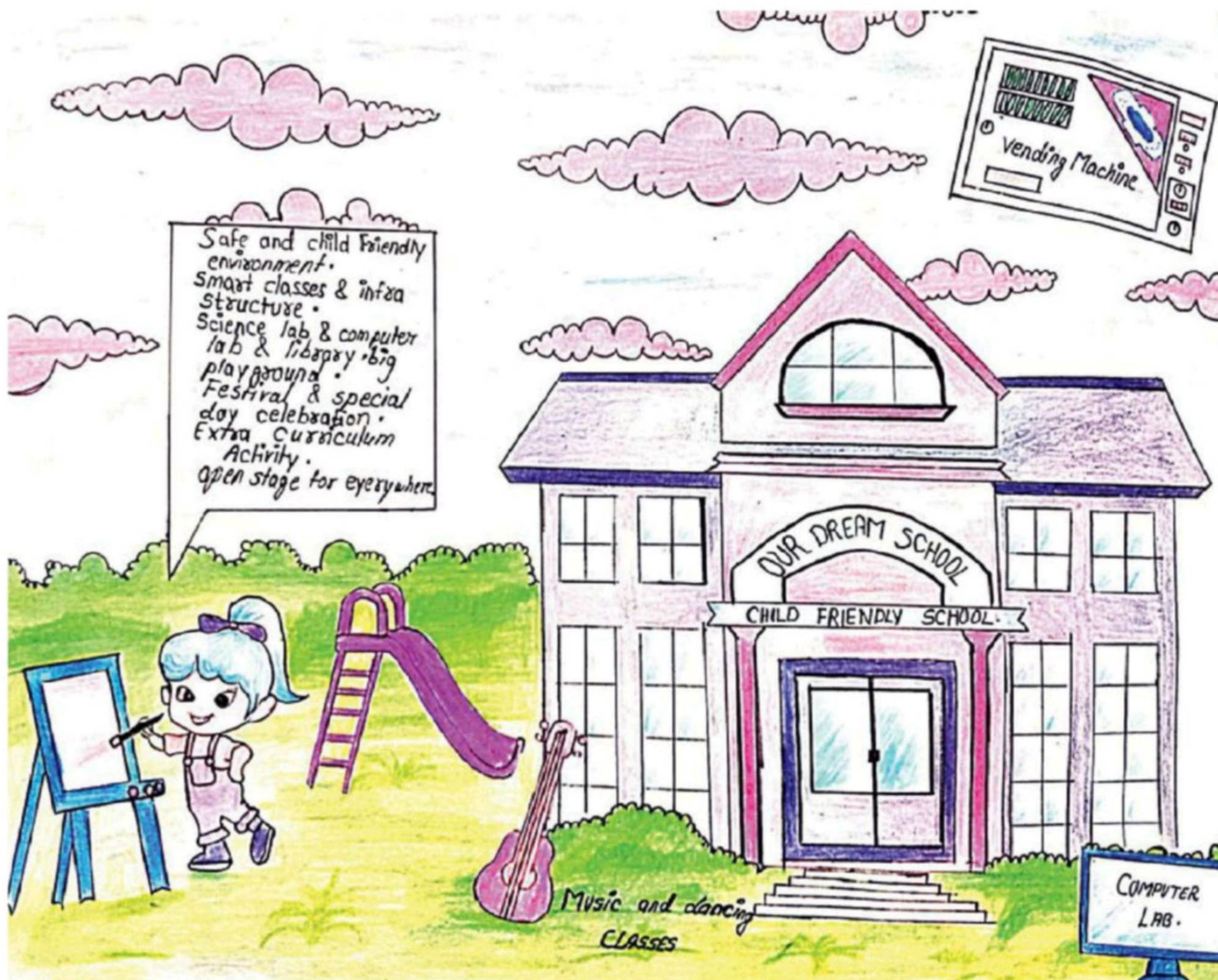
PASTEL, PERFECTED

While the players rallied on court, Specta debuted something just as subtle and impactful: the Pastel Poise collection. A first-of-its-kind launch in India's quartz category, the collection offered designers something they've long yearned for—soft, versatile colours that don't overpower. The collection features four muted tones—Azure Haze (blue), Gulmarg Pink, Lavender Crest, and Mint Mirage—each as livable as it is design-forward. To celebrate the shades, teams were named after them, giving personality and palette a shared platform.

Designers praised the palette for its freshness and flexibility. Amar Zhaveri appreciated the tones as “subtle and fresh,” while Ankit Shah, having already used the slabs in multiple projects, called them “some of the most versatile surfaces we've worked with.” Karan Jambusarwala found Gulmarg Pink “nuanced, neither too bold nor too muted”—perfect for a quiet statement. For Suzan

Banajee, the collection brought renewed energy to kitchen design: “Until now, quartz colours were either too mundane or overly bright—but this range strikes the perfect balance.”

Others echoed the sentiment. Rahul Menon saw the shades as a welcome shift in a material world often dominated by neutrals: “Mint Mirage is my latest musing—it exudes freshness and novelty, never seen before.” Amar Jhaveri noted its “burst of subtle freshness,” while Aarti Kapadia named Azure Haze her personal favourite for its contemporary coolness. Zill Jhaveri felt the range captured a certain softness that designers rarely get to play with, sharing “That soft, muted green is such a rare find in quartz surfaces,” referring to Mint Mirage. “It's subtle, fresh, and exactly the kind of tone I'm always hunting for but rarely get.” Each designer found in the collection something that extended beyond aesthetics—emotion, intent, and inspiration.



A collaborative partnership between Specta Surfaces and CRY.

“Every child is born with boundless creativity. Our mission is to ensure they have a happy, healthy, and safe childhood where this potential can be realized.

The ‘Coloring Dreams’ campaign acknowledges that nurturing creativity is not a luxury, but a fundamental part of a child’s development and right.”

—PUJA MARWAHA, CEO of CRY

SPECTA X CRY: COLOURING DREAMS

Rounding off the event was a powerful social commitment. Specta announced a partnership with CRY – Child Rights and You, through a campaign titled “Coloring Dreams of India’s Children.” For every slab sold from the new collection, Specta will donate ₹500 to support art and education initiatives for underprivileged children.

“Every child is born with boundless creativity. Our mission is to ensure they have a happy, healthy, and safe childhood where this potential can be realized. The ‘Coloring Dreams’ campaign

acknowledges that nurturing creativity is not a luxury, but a fundamental part of a child’s development and right,” said Puja Marwaha, CEO of CRY. “We are thrilled to partner with Specta—a brand that understands the power of imagination and is helping us cast these young, vibrant dreams in stone.”

In a space where brands often speak in monologues, Specta’s Pickleball Open started a conversation. One that volleyed between surface and spirit, product and people—and perhaps most memorably, between play and purpose. ✚

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INSIDE VIEW: EPISODE 2 – DESIGN IS IN THE DETAILS

A fashion designer and two architects trace how detail shapes design and identity



In episode two of Schueco India's Inside View series, *Design is in the Details*, in collaboration with Architecture + Design and Lifestyle Asia India, fashion designer Pranav Kirti Misra teams up with architects Sanchit Arora and Shantanu Garg to dive into the art of detailing in both fashion and architecture. Pranav shares insights into how the smallest details—whether it's the intricacy of embroidery or the structure of a garment—can turn a design, while the architects discuss how every element, no matter how minute, plays a pivotal role in shaping a space.

Together, they explore how detailing infuses both function and flair into interiors. Topics like custom wardrobes, boutique displays and showrooms built to withstand the test of time are discussed, as the trio examines the balance between durability and style. The conversation takes an interesting turn as they touch upon a critical yet often overlooked challenge in design—the impact of humidity on materials and fabrics. With practical advice on protecting textiles, paints and other sensitive elements from climate-induced wear, they offer solutions from both fashion and architectural viewpoints.

THE POWER OF DETAIL

The conversation begins with the significance of detail in design. According to Shantanu, detail is not just about the visible elements; it's about the deeper connection that forms between design and its cultural roots. For him, design is an expression of identity and culture, especially when it comes to integrating Indian heritage into modern forms.

This connection between design and identity is something that runs through his work. Shantanu recalls a client from Hyderabad who wanted a modern home that also reflected their cultural identity. This project was a turning point for him, pushing him to move beyond Western influences and embrace an Indian design vocabulary that felt globally relevant. His work began to incorporate Indian motifs, even finding ways to blend them with modern elements, such as imagining a Baccarat crystal glass with an Indian Jali pattern.

DESIGN AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

As the conversation evolves, the idea of design as a reflection of human experience becomes central. Sanchit, a young architect, draws parallels between architecture and fashion, describing design as something that's not just about aesthetics but also about how it resonates with the people who interact with it. "Every space has its own energy," explains Shantanu. This idea extends into how we perceive spaces. The architecture of a space, much like fashion, is about form, function, and the materials that create it. Sanchit's design philosophy emphasises layering, much like the layering of experiences that happen in a well-designed space. In fashion, Pranav also sees this layering process as essential. His designs, much like the way Shantanu works with architecture, are about adding layers of meaning and experience.

PERFECTION IN IMPERFECTION

An interesting theme emerges in the conversation: the pursuit of



Together, they explore how detailing infuses both function and flair into interiors. Topics like custom wardrobes, boutique displays and showrooms built to withstand the test of time are discussed, as the trio examines the balance between durability and style.



perfection in design and how this intersects with the philosophy of Wabi Sabi—embracing imperfection as beauty. The idea that imperfection can bring peace and authenticity to design is explored, as the trio reflects on how humanity’s obsession with perfection has led to an appreciation for the natural irregularities found in materials and forms.

Shantanu muses, “Humans discovered straight lines, it is our invention, actually, we invented it. So why not we celebrate that? We must celebrate the straight line and find beauty in both the perfect and the imperfect.” This philosophical outlook informs much of their work—whether it’s in architecture, clothing, or design elements—making room for imperfection in order to achieve balance.

THE INTERSECTION OF FASHION AND ARCHITECTURE

For Shantanu, who has begun to explore other design disciplines like fashion and jewelry design, his architectural background informs his approach to creating clothing. The forms, materials, and proportions that define his architecture carry over into the way he approaches fashion.

This crossover between architecture and fashion is not just about aesthetics; it’s about creating an experience for the wearer or the inhabitant. Just as architecture uses layers to create different spatial experiences, fashion incorporates layers to evoke different emotional responses in the wearer.

SUSTAINABILITY AND MATERIAL INTEGRITY

The importance of sustainability in design is also discussed, as the

panelists agree that integrity is central to their work. In architecture, Sanchit emphasises the use of materials with integrity—choosing real marble over imitation, for example. In fashion, Pranav similarly seeks materials that maintain their authenticity, whether it’s cotton or synthetics designed for specific needs. Sustainability in design, they agree, goes beyond just choosing eco-friendly materials. It’s about using what is needed and not over-exploiting the environment. Whether it’s a building that incorporates traditional window systems to enhance thermal insulation or a piece of clothing designed for extreme weather, the principle of doing justice to the environment is fundamental.

DESIGNING WITH PURPOSE

Ultimately, the philosophy of design that emerges from this conversation is one rooted in purpose. “Design’s job is to solve a problem,” says Sanchit. It’s about addressing the needs of the people who will experience the space or wear the garment. This is true in architecture, where every line and curve should have a purpose, as much as in fashion, where the fabric and silhouette should serve the body and the personality of the wearer.

In a world where trends evolve rapidly, the conversation reminds us that true design transcends fleeting styles. It’s about creating work that is not just beautiful or functional but meaningful. Whether it’s the architecture of a home, the clothes we wear, or a piece of jewelry, design is a conversation between the creator and the environment, the form and the function, the past and the present.

INSIDE VIEW: EPISODE 3 – THE SPATIAL EXPERIENCE

What two architects and a wellness expert see when they walk into a room



In a city where “space is a luxury,” creating environments that support health and movement demands more than just good looks. It asks for sensitivity, problem-solving, and a keen understanding of how we live—and how we want to feel. Episode 3 of *Inside View*—presented by Schueco India in collaboration with *Architecture+Design* and *Lifestyle Asia Magazine*—brings together Sumaya Dalmia, founder of the wellness brand Sumaya; architect Natasha Kochhar of LTDF Architecture + ID; and Archana Baid of AND Design Co., in a conversation on space, movement and design.

“Design itself means solving for another,” Natasha points out. And in the world of wellness, that means working around constraints—tight floor plates, no natural light, limited ventilation—while still offering users a space that feels intuitive and energising.

Sumaya recalls one such early collaboration with Natasha, when she wanted to create a personal training space in a compact location.

“When I came into your office, I remember I had this vision about what a studio of mine would look like. And it wasn’t very big,” says Sumaya. “And I remember sitting and talking to you and saying, listen, my space is so small, but I want it to be like a one-on-one workout studio,” she adds.

That studio set the tone for both their trajectories. “That was also my first fitness wellness space,” Natasha adds, “inspired by yours truly.”

POST-PANDEMIC PRIORITIES

Fast forward to today, and the brief has evolved—partly because clients are more informed, and partly because of shifting priorities post-pandemic. “Post COVID, all of us have learned that, you know, life is very fragile,” Sumaya says. “People incorporating wellness into their homes now—whether it’s with home gyms or whether it’s with home spas.”

The design vocabulary around wellness has also shifted—while “human centricity” is a current buzzword, it’s essentially a return to what architecture and interior design have always been rooted in.

SPACES THAT BREATHE AND FLOW

Whether it’s a gym or a dental clinic, wellness-driven spaces aren’t just about light and ventilation. They’re about how the body flows through the room. “I feel, personally, for me, space needs to be breathable,” says Archana. “How it interacts with light, air and movement is so very important.”

But not every space gets light and air on cue. Archana recalls



working on the Skuccii Supercliniq in Mumbai, which had minimal access to natural ventilation. So she relied on design moves to create an energetic anchor. “The whole idea was to bring in natural... form of energy into the space,” she says, pointing to an inverted tree structure in the centre. “It calms people down.”

DESIGNING AROUND URBAN REALITIES

And yet, designing for wellness is never one-size-fits-all. In Delhi, for instance, there’s often more room to work with—but air quality becomes a challenge. “In Bombay, space is a luxury; Delhi, air is luxury,” Natasha quips. For Sumaya, who often works in Delhi, factoring in air quality has become a key part of the brief—decisions around filtration systems and other environmental considerations are now front and centre. As projects evolve, so do the clients. Sumaya, for instance, is far more hands-on today. “The last gym I designed, I actually did a lot of it myself... Because for us, you know, flooring matters, equipment, sound, light, air,” says Sumaya.

OLD WISDOM, NEW TOOLS

Material innovation and mechanical systems are also stepping in to do

more. “Even for that matter, air humidifiers,” Archana notes.

Lighting, too, is no longer just about ambience. It affects behaviour. “When you have yellower lighting, you blink slower,” Natasha says. “McDonald’s, etc., have to be white. You blink faster, you eat faster, you get out faster.” Sumaya chimes in with a Vegas anecdote: “Apparently in casinos, at some point they pump in so much oxygen because they want people to be awake and keep playing.”

Interestingly, many of today’s so-called ‘new’ concerns—air quality, energy use, spatial flow—have existed for centuries, just framed differently. Systems like Vastu, as Natasha explains, weren’t rooted in dogma but in pragmatism. Long before mechanical ventilation or artificial lighting, they offered intuitive solutions that not only enhanced comfort but, when thoughtfully adapted today, continue to support low-energy, sustainable design.

For all three women, wellness is more than a trend. It’s personal, it’s spatial, and it’s built into every decision—from where the light falls to how the air moves.

Visit the Schueco India Welcome Forum at BPTP Capital Unit No. 5, 2nd floor, BPTP Capital City, Sector-94, Noida, Uttar Pradesh – 201301. 📍

CHARU KOKATE: DESIGNING BETWEEN WORLDS

Urban architecture across Asia is going through a massive shift courtesy of Senior Partner at Safdie Architects Charu Kokate. Through iconic projects like Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport, she weaves cultural fluency, sustainability, and human-centric design into vibrant, inclusive spaces that redefine how we connect with our cities

By Kashish Kaushal



Guided by purpose, Charu Kokate envisions architecture as a catalyst for positive change, creating ripples that extend across communities, neighborhoods, and cities; Image courtesy Safdie Architects

Some buildings are built in a way that transcends the city they belong to. It doesn't matter if you belong to that city or even visited it once in your lifetime. There are some buildings that stop you in your tracks—not because they tower above the skyline or gleam with architectural bravado, but because they pulse with life. Case in point, Singapore's Jewel Changi Airport.

Travellers make it a point to reserve some time from their transit to marvel at the world's tallest indoor waterfall (130 ft) gushing through an indoor forest. To design such spaces, it is paramount that the architect realises that great structures aren't just about form following function, they are about encouraging connection. Get it right, and you create spaces that become integral to a city's identity. Get it wrong, and you've built an expensive monument to missed opportunity. Charu Kokate, Senior Partner at Safdie Architects, has made a career of getting it right.

Her work demonstrates that the most successful international projects aren't those that impose a foreign vision, but those that amplify what already exists, creating spaces that feel both unmistakably local and universally resonant. In conversation with us, she reveals how her multicultural journey has shaped her approach to design, the collaborative processes behind some of Asia's most celebrated architectural achievements, and her vision for an architecture that serves community, sustainability, and human connection. Read on to discover how one architect is helping to redefine what it means to build for a global world while staying rooted.

Your journey from Pune to being a Senior Partner is remarkable. How did your upbringing in India and your education at the University of Pune shape your design philosophy, particularly in blending cultural sensitivity with the demands of global, large-scale projects?

Having grown up in India, built much of my career in the United States, and now serving as a Senior Partner at Safdie Architects, leading projects across Asia, I have become a global citizen, unbound by any single nation. This journey has greatly strengthened my cultural sensitivity and deepened my appreciation for the world's diversity.



The Jewel Changi Airport merges nature and commerce, redefining the airport as an urban center that engages both locals and visitors. Its greenery, natural light, and seamless indoor-outdoor experiences reflect Singapore's focus on sustainability; *Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects*

“

The spinal organisation in Marina Bay Sands and the biophilic design in Jewel Changi Airport reflect a profound understanding of local traditions and climate, ensuring these projects resonate with Singapore's identity.”

—CHARU KOKATE



Jewel Changi Airport redefines the airport as a vibrant urban hub, seamlessly blending nature and commerce; *Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects*

Through these experiences, I've gained a rich perspective on various cultures and a profound respect for the unique traditions and qualities of each place and its people.

At Safdie Architects, we believe deeply in understanding local contexts, materials, and climates as the foundation of our design approach. For me and my fellow partners, architecture is more than just building structures; it's about creating meaningful spaces that resonate with the cultural and environmental fabric of their surroundings. This philosophy ensures our projects are both globally relevant and rooted in local significance. Inspired by the idea of "For Everyone a Garden," we integrate nature and community into our designs. This is evident in our iconic projects in Singapore, where we have crafted spaces that not only stand out but also reflect the city's identity as a "City in a Garden."

Projects like Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport have redefined urban landmarks. How did your cultural fluency influence the conceptualisation of these projects, and what specific design choices reflect your approach to creating spaces that resonate across diverse audiences?

Both Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport exemplify Safdie Architects' commitment to creating urban spaces that are deeply

engaging by blending cultural and environmental contexts. The spinal organisation in Marina Bay Sands and the biophilic design in Jewel Changi Airport reflect a profound understanding of local traditions and climate, ensuring these projects resonate with Singapore's identity. These designs prioritise accessibility and inclusivity, offering spaces for community interaction, cultural expression, and leisure.

Inspired by the Roman concept of a spinal city, Marina Bay Sands is thoughtfully organised with its various components: Theatres, Casino, Convention Centre, Retail spaces, and interconnected public thoroughfares - arranged to be intuitive and self-orienting. This design seamlessly extends the vibrancy of city life through the Integrated Resort. Infused with lush landscapes and natural daylight, these public spaces embody Singapore's "City in a Garden" ethos, fostering a sense of community and connection.

Jewel Changi Airport merges nature and commerce, redefining the airport as an urban center that engages both locals and visitors. Its greenery, natural light, and seamless indoor-outdoor experiences reflect Singapore's focus on sustainability. Every detail, from the Rain Vortex to the thoughtfully designed public spaces, is crafted to be inclusive, accessible, and culturally meaningful, creating a space that resonates emotionally with people from diverse backgrounds.

Marina Bay Sands is a powerful urban composition, organised like a spinal city to weave together theaters, a casino, convention spaces, retail, and interconnected public thoroughfares; *Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects*



Marina Bay Sands' design draws from Singapore's tropical identity, infusing lush landscapes and natural daylight to create intuitive, self-orienting spaces; *Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects*





The Surbana Jurong Campus, nestled in Singapore's Jurong Innovation District, reimagines the corporate workplace as a collaborative, nature-infused hub; Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects

The impact of these projects is evident in their successful contribution to Singapore's cultural and economic landscape. They attract international attention, boost tourism, and foster a sense of pride among locals.

The Surbana Jurong Campus and The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88 represent distinct typologies—corporate and hospitality. Can you share how you navigate the unique challenges of each during conceptualisation, and what common thread in your design approach ties these projects together?

At Safdie Architects, we tailored our approach to the distinct typologies of the Surbana Jurong Campus and The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88, ensuring each project reflected our commitment to creating meaningful, connected spaces.

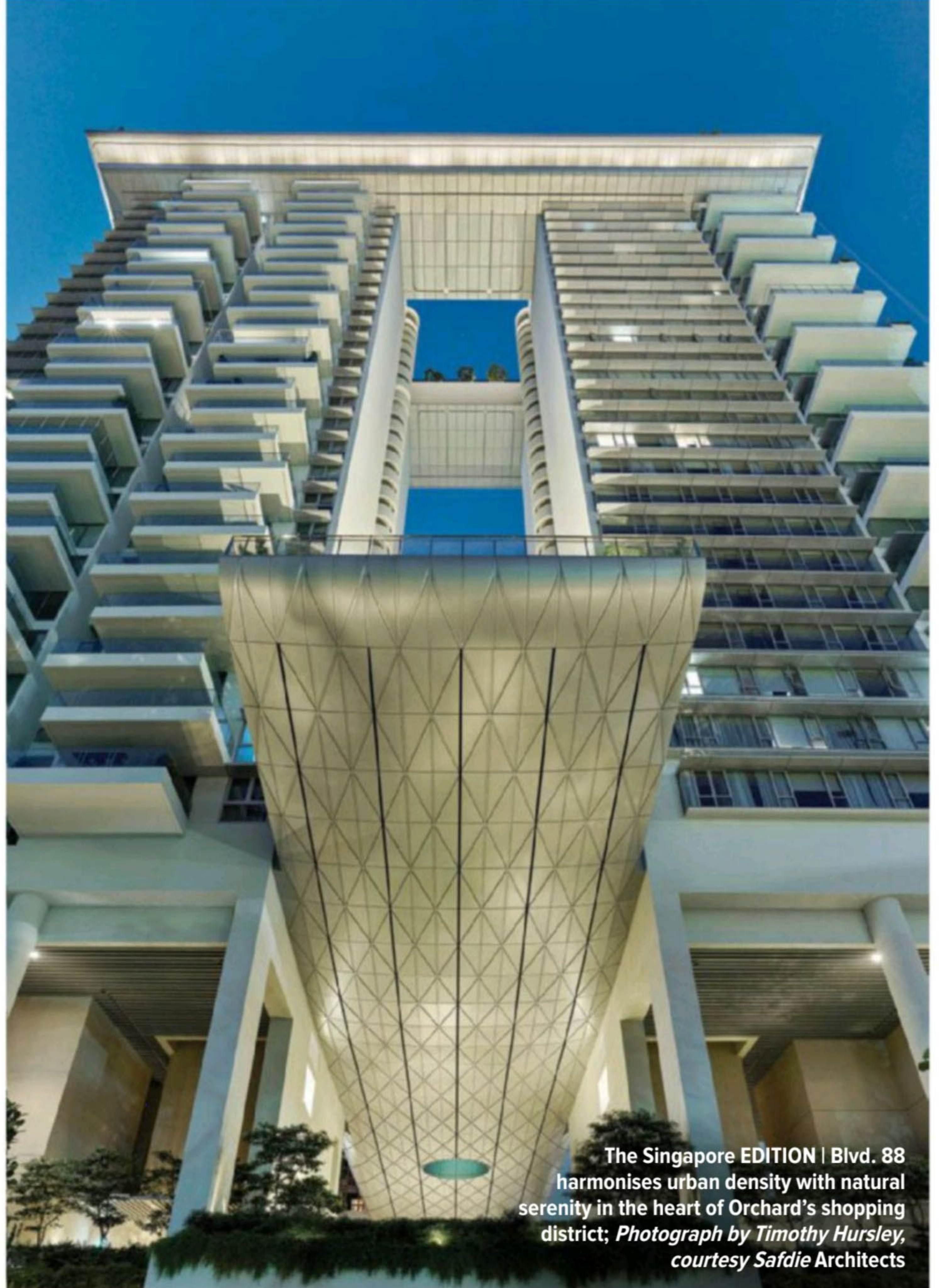
The Surbana Jurong Campus, located in Singapore's Jurong Innovation District, reimagines the corporate campus as a vibrant community hub. Situated away from the bustling financial district, it serves as a nexus for research and innovation, fostering collaboration among employees and the broader community. Drawing inspiration from the site's tranquil natural surroundings, the design strikes a balance between engagement and intimacy. By seamlessly integrating interior and exterior landscapes, with gardens flowing deep into the campus, we created a network of flexible workspaces immersed in lush greenery. This integration encourages spontaneous collaboration, facilitates the free exchange of ideas, and provides visual connections across levels, with direct

views of the surrounding Eco Garden—enhancing the sense of place.

In contrast, The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88, located in the vibrant heart of Singapore's Orchard shopping district, exemplifies a mixed-use development that harmonises urban density with nature. Comprising 28-story residential towers and a 204-room hotel, the project ensures distinct identities for each component while prioritising privacy and unique experiences for its occupants. This was achieved through the strategic orientation of the buildings towards different streets and the creation of a central courtyard garden that fosters connectivity within the development.

Despite their differing typologies, both projects share a common emphasis on fostering connections—whether among employees, residents, or the environment. Both prioritise seamless indoor-outdoor experiences and the integration of nature. The Surbana Jurong Campus features lush interior gardens, while The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88 incorporates a sunken garden that links yet separates the hotel and residences. Ultimately, the design of both projects serves as platforms for interaction, engagement, and well-being, enhancing the experience of those who inhabit these spaces.

The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88 blends hospitality with urban context. How did you approach integrating this project into Singapore's dense urban fabric while ensuring it retained a distinct identity, and what role did collaboration with stakeholders play in this process?



The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88 harmonises urban density with natural serenity in the heart of Orchard's shopping district; *Photograph by Timothy Hursley, courtesy Safdie Architects*

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We tailored our approach to the distinct typologies of the Surbana Jurong Campus and The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88, ensuring each project reflected our commitment to creating meaningful, connected spaces.”

—CHARU KOKATE

Integrating The Singapore EDITION | Blvd. 88 into Singapore's dynamic urban landscape required balancing the distinct identities of the hotel and residential tower while ensuring the project seamlessly fit within the city's context. Our goal was to create a development that felt rooted in its surroundings while offering a unique addition to Singapore's skyline.

We achieved this by orienting the buildings to face different streets and designing a central courtyard garden that defines the space and fosters connection within the development. This sunken garden links

and separates the hotel and residences, with the hotel surrounding it on three sides, providing stunning views from the lobby, restaurant, and bars. Lower-level spaces like meeting rooms and a speakeasy lounge open directly to the courtyard, blending indoor and outdoor experiences.

Staying true to Safdie Architects' vision of interconnected urban spaces, the project features multiple Skyparks that unify the hotel and residences. Building on our skypark concept first introduced at Marina Bay Sands and later reimagined at Raffles City Chongqing, we created a vibrant public space within the building. The materials and design reflect Singapore's architectural style while embracing the EDITION brand's luxurious, modern feel. To address the tropical climate, we incorporated lattice screens, horizontal fin shades for the hotel, and staggered balconies for the residences, offering both openness and protection from the elements.

Collaboration was crucial in this mixed-use development. Working closely with clients, consultants, and local authorities, we navigated the challenges of building in a dense urban environment, compounded by COVID-related issues like city closures, labor shortages, and travel restrictions. Through continuous dialogue, we ensured the design met the high standards of a global hotel brand and residential towers while blending seamlessly into Singapore's iconic skyline. This collaborative approach, grounded in mutual respect and adaptability, helped us create a transformative space that connects people, nature, and the city.

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The future of architecture lies in shaping spaces that have a lasting, positive impact on both people and the planet. I look forward to contributing to a movement that sees design as a force for meaningful change.”

—CHARU KOKATE

Your work often pushes the boundaries of scale and ambition. What philosophical or theoretical frameworks guide your approach to designing spaces that are both bold and functional, and how do these principles manifest in Surbana Jurong Campus?

At Safdie Architects, our design philosophy centers on the belief that architecture transcends form; it's about creating experiences, building community, and shaping environments that improve the lives of those who use them. We focus on crafting spaces that are both bold and functional, addressing current needs while anticipating future demands.

In large-scale projects like Surbana Jurong Campus, we design spaces that encourage connection, interaction, and collaboration. Rather than isolating employees in individual offices, we envisioned a headquarters that promotes a sense of community with interconnected areas that foster spontaneous interaction and openness. Sustainability is also a core focus. We integrate natural materials, greenery, and optimised light and airflow to meet the

growing demand for environmentally conscious buildings. Features like courtyard gardens, green terraces, and open-air spaces create a seamless indoor-outdoor experience, enhancing employee well-being.

The campus' form, materials, and functionality reflect these principles, transforming it into not just an iconic landmark but a vibrant hub that nurtures innovation, community, and sustainability.

Your commitment to mentorship is inspiring. How do you balance nurturing the next generation of architects with the demands of overseeing iconic projects, and what lessons from your own journey do you most hope to impart to emerging professionals?

Balancing mentorship with overseeing iconic projects like Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport is about integrating it into my work. Mentoring is not separate from my role; it's woven into the fabric of what I do. Despite the demands of high-profile projects, I prioritise creating an open culture where young architects can learn through real project challenges—whether it's design iterations or site coordination. I set

The Altair tower, the tallest residential building in Sri Lanka, provides outdoor garden terraces at every level with an innovative two-leg structural design; *Photograph by Space80, courtesy Safdie Architects*



aside time for focused mentorship through weekly check-ins, informal chats, and work reviews, ensuring I stay connected to their growth without impacting project timelines. I also extend my reach through lectures and design reviews, sharing insights with a broader audience while managing my workload. These interactions allow me to share experiences, provide guidance, and learn from fresh perspectives. I encourage my team to take on leadership roles, supporting their growth while also providing guidance from senior members.

My journey has taught me resilience, adaptability, and the value of interdisciplinary collaboration. I instill in my mentees the importance of integrating technical proficiency with a deep understanding of cultural and environmental contexts. Architecture is a tough profession, and I've faced setbacks navigating cultural nuances on international projects. I encourage young architects to view challenges as opportunities to refine their vision, just as I did with complex projects in Asia.

Staying true to a humanist design philosophy is very important to me. My work with Safdie Architects taught me that great architecture serves people and communities, not just aesthetics. Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi are testaments to this. I emphasise this lesson to young architects, reinforcing the importance of creating spaces that truly serve the public.

As a woman in a male-dominated industry, I have learned to advocate for my ideas with confidence. I share my journey of navigating this space, fostering collaboration, and encouraging young professionals - especially women - to find their voice, seek mentors, and embrace continuous learning to shape meaningful careers. By nurturing the next generation's creativity and guiding them through real-world challenges, we will help develop well-rounded professionals.

Your projects often balance innovation with human-centric design. Can you share a pivotal moment in your career where you had to rethink a design solution to prioritise user experience, and how did this influence your approach to subsequent projects?

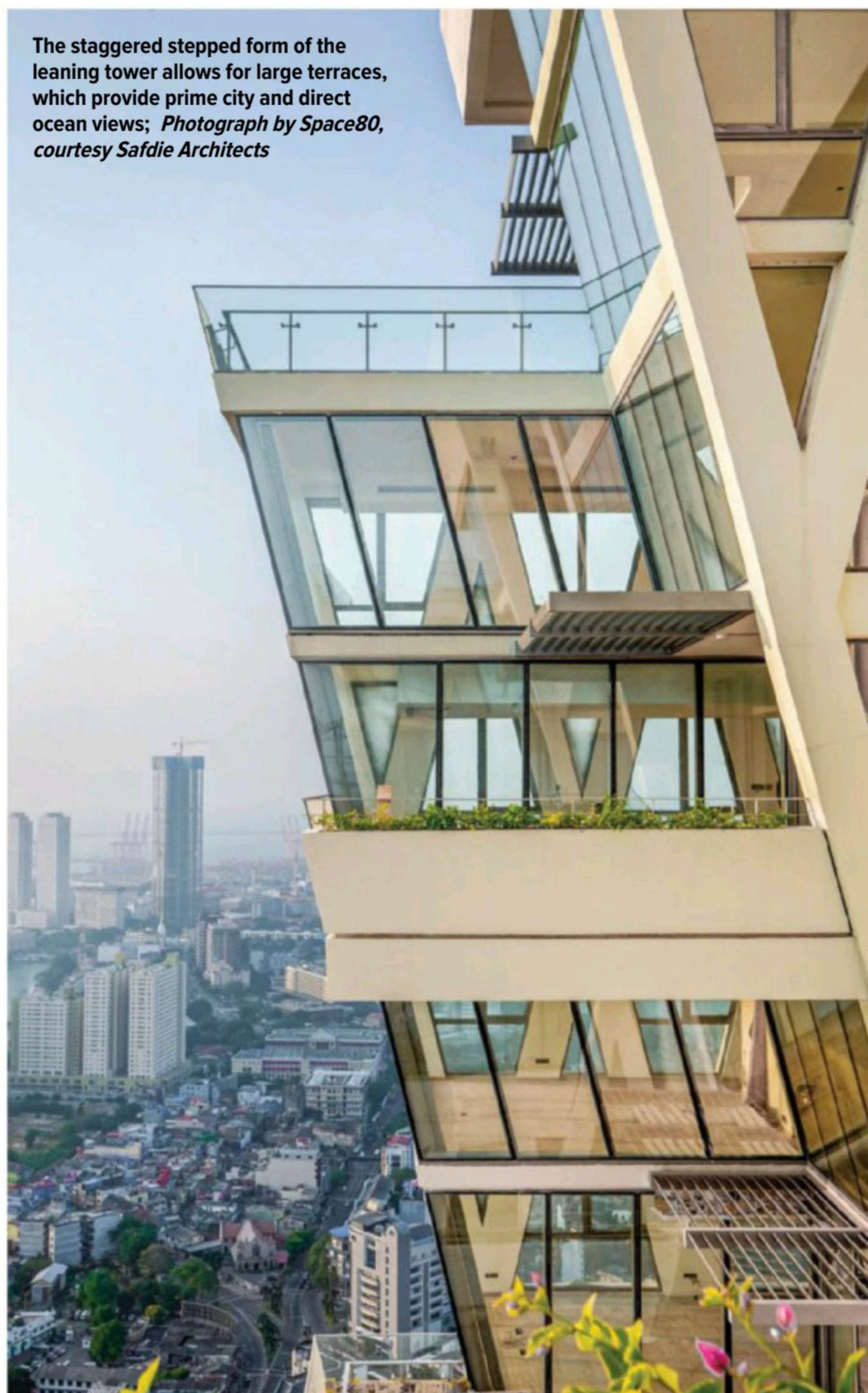
During the design competition for Jewel Changi Airport, we recognised the need to break away from conventional approaches to create a truly impactful space. Despite the tight site and the demanding constraints of Changi Airport's program, we envisioned a timeless community garden centered around a striking waterfall. Our design reimagines the traditional airport by integrating nature into an internal public space. At its heart, the Forest Valley and dramatic waterfall create a serene, immersive environment that eases the stress of travel and fosters a deep connection to nature.

Since its opening over six years ago, Jewel has captivated locals and tourists, not only with its grand waterfall and lush forest but also with the emotional resonance of the space, sparking wonder and joy across generations. This experience reinforced our belief in uncovering a project's core essence and considering its impact on the land, environment, and community—going beyond basic needs to create something extraordinary. As we approach new projects, this experience reminds us that every project is an opportunity to blend artistic expression with innovation, creating spaces that transcend function and inspire the community.

Looking forward, how do you envision your work evolving as urban challenges like sustainability and inclusivity become more pressing? Are there specific boundaries you hope to push in your future projects to address these global issues?

I believe architecture is a catalyst for positive change, addressing urban challenges through innovative, context-driven design. As I often say, "Great projects aren't just admired; they're embraced by communities."

The staggered stepped form of the leaning tower allows for large terraces, which provide prime city and direct ocean views; Photograph by Space80, courtesy Safdie Architects



At Safdie Architects, my partners and I strive to lead projects that push the boundaries of bio-responsive architecture, community-centered design, and holistic urban planning, creating sustainable, inclusive spaces that thrive as vibrant, livable environments.

Our success lies in integrating nature with design to foster sustainable environments that positively impact users across residential, commercial, and office projects. Sustainability extends beyond energy efficiency or LEED certifications – it is about creating spaces that promote well-being, connect people to green spaces, and adapt to climate change. Modular, biophilic designs that maximize natural light and ventilation while reducing carbon footprints through passive cooling and renewable materials are key to the future of architecture.

Inspired by Singapore's balance of green spaces and social infrastructure, I believe architecture must respond to its natural surroundings while meeting the diverse needs of its users. Ultimately, the future of architecture lies in shaping spaces that have a lasting, positive impact on both people and the planet. I look forward to contributing to a movement that sees design as a force for meaningful change. 🌱



Hardesh and Monica Chawla pictured in Monica's office cabin, embodying understated elegance and poised confidence that is reflective of their design philosophy and partnership

COVER FEATURE

The Stallions of Indian Design

How Hardesh and Monica Chawla transformed their vision of thoughtful luxury into a 25-year legacy, championing India's craft techniques while creating spaces that elevate everyday living.

From their in-house manufacturing to their son Hridik's global perspective, Essentia Environments proves that 'Made in India' is the future of timeless design

INTERVIEW: **KASHISH KAUSHAL** PORTRAITS: **MEETESH TANEJA**

There is something riveting about walking into Essentia Environment's office in Gurugram. Not because of its sheer scale or the fact that its appearance is a little formidable, (though the marble-clad entryway and interiors do command respect) but simply because it makes you pause, and a sense of intrigue overlaps your mind.

It compels you to rethink your understanding of what luxury truly means. A mecca in marble that leaves an everlasting impression no matter how many times you cross paths; this office is tangible proof to their belief that design should elevate every aspect of human experience. The glass doors, marked with words like 'Solutionist' and 'Pathfinder,' aren't just design elements; they are manifestos carved in transparency, mirroring the philosophy that has driven Essentia Environments for a quarter-century.

The consistently progressing dialogue around high-end design reveals perhaps the most thoughtful aspect of the Essentia philosophy. "Luxury is often misunderstood as being synonymous with price," explains Co-founder and Principal Designer of Essentia Environments Hardesh Chawla. "For me, one of the most important components of luxury is personalisation. True luxury is when something is designed specifically for you, tailored to your lifestyle, your preferences, and your needs." This understanding has led to what might be considered a revolutionary approach to high-end design. "Sometimes, less is more. People often tend to buy more than they need—but many of those things aren't of the best quality. I believe true comfort lies in owning fewer things but ensuring that each one is of exceptional quality."

The philosophy becomes even more fascinating when you consider the man behind it. Hardesh Chawla is perpetually in motion—I've witnessed his legendary hustle firsthand during multiple instances. He's the rare combination of visionary and pragmatist, someone who can articulate the most abstract design concepts while simultaneously managing the mind-boggling logistics of a manufacturing empire. And that's not even his best quality. Not only has he managed to create beautiful spaces for all his clients, but he has also developed a propitious environment for his employees that could easily rival any posh residence. The Essentia workspace has a dedicated floor that is so rich in design that his team never faces a dearth of inspiration. This isn't a coincidence, it's strategic. In Hardesh's world, inspiration isn't a luxury; it's a necessity.

His better (best) half and Creative Head Monica Chawla is, in every sense, a force to be reckoned with. If Hardesh is the philosophical voice of Essentia, Monica is its creative conscience. "Monica has an incredible eye for design and creativity. That's her domain, and she leads it," Hardesh acknowledges. "I, on the other hand, focus more on

execution, efficiency, and cost management." This division of tasks isn't just professional—it's personal. "I don't get involved in the commercials at all—that's something Hardesh takes complete responsibility for," she explains. "Interestingly, this clarity in responsibility started even at home. Our domestic life taught us early on how effective a partnership can be when duties are clearly divided based on strengths."

Taking the baton forward, their son Hridik Chawla helms Essentia Home. "Hridik, being the youngest in the team, brings a certain energy and enthusiasm that's very refreshing," Hardesh observes. "He has a different sense of learning and operates with a kind of urgency. I often say he wants to achieve in a year what might typically take ten." This generational perspective is crucial to understanding Essentia's evolution. While the foundational values remain unchanged, the execution has become more aggressive and globally minded.

At a time when "Make in India" has been reduced to just a campaign, the Chawlas have been quietly walking the talk for years. Their in-house manufacturing unit isn't just about cost control; it's about maintaining the human touch that separates true opulence from mass production. "We also believe in staying rooted to what's local," Monica emphasises. "I don't see the need to use imported materials like African timber just to create the impression of grandeur. In fact, 99% of the marble we use is Indian marble. We also produce high-quality furniture in-house, which allows us to maintain both craftsmanship and sustainability." The challenge, as Monica sees it, isn't just about creating beautiful objects—it's about changing perceptions. "Sadly, handmade work is often more celebrated abroad than here, but I believe it should be a point of pride. A product made by hand isn't just functional, it's personal and that's the essence of luxury."

I've had the privilege of interacting with Hardesh and Monica Chawla multiple times, and each encounter has been a masterclass in understanding the intersection of business acumen and creative vision. When I was tasked with writing this cover feature, I'll admit to a moment of self-doubt. What could I possibly say about Essentia that hasn't been explored before? Hardesh and Monica Chawla are, after all, one of the titans of our industry. Their projects dominate publications, their insights shape industry discourse, and their approachable nature contradicts their heavyweight status. The challenge wasn't finding material; it was discovering the untold story within a narrative that seemed completely familiar. This cover story unveils Essentia's soul, blending the grandeur of their work with the humanity behind it. It's a tale of perseverance, a husband-and-wife team whose trust fuels their synergy, and a family crafting "Made in India" masterpieces. As you delve further, you will discover what makes Essentia not just a name, but a movement—one that gallops towards the future with every space, every sculpture, and every story.

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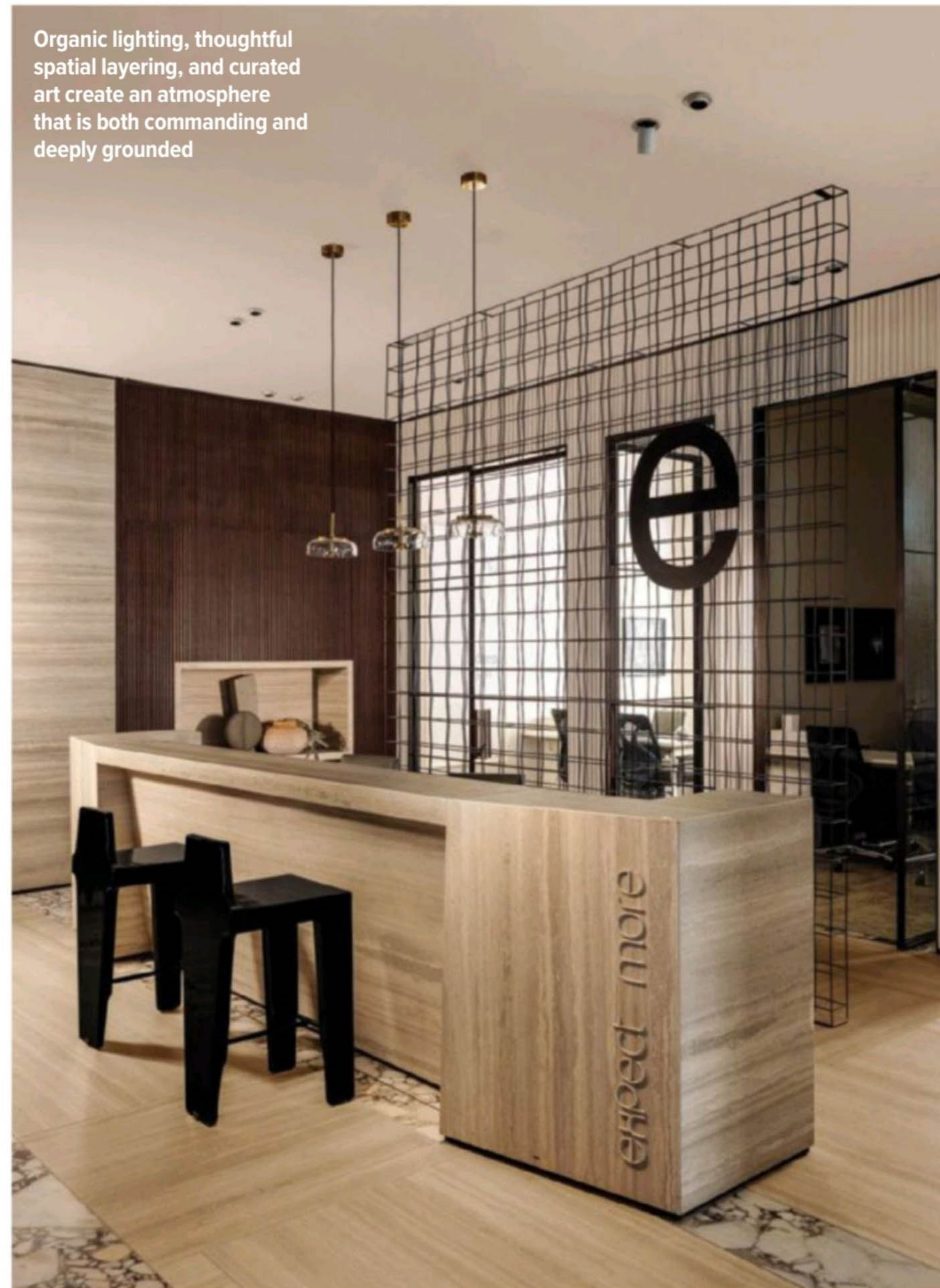
—**HARDESH CHAWLA**, Co-founder & Principal Designer, Essentia Environments



The Essentia office isn't your typical workplace. It's a thoughtfully designed environment where clarity, control, and creativity are expressed through every detail



Textural contrasts, polished travertine, ribbed wood, and expressive marbles, serve as sculptural backdrop to zones that flow seamlessly between function and form



Organic lighting, thoughtful spatial layering, and curated art create an atmosphere that is both commanding and deeply grounded

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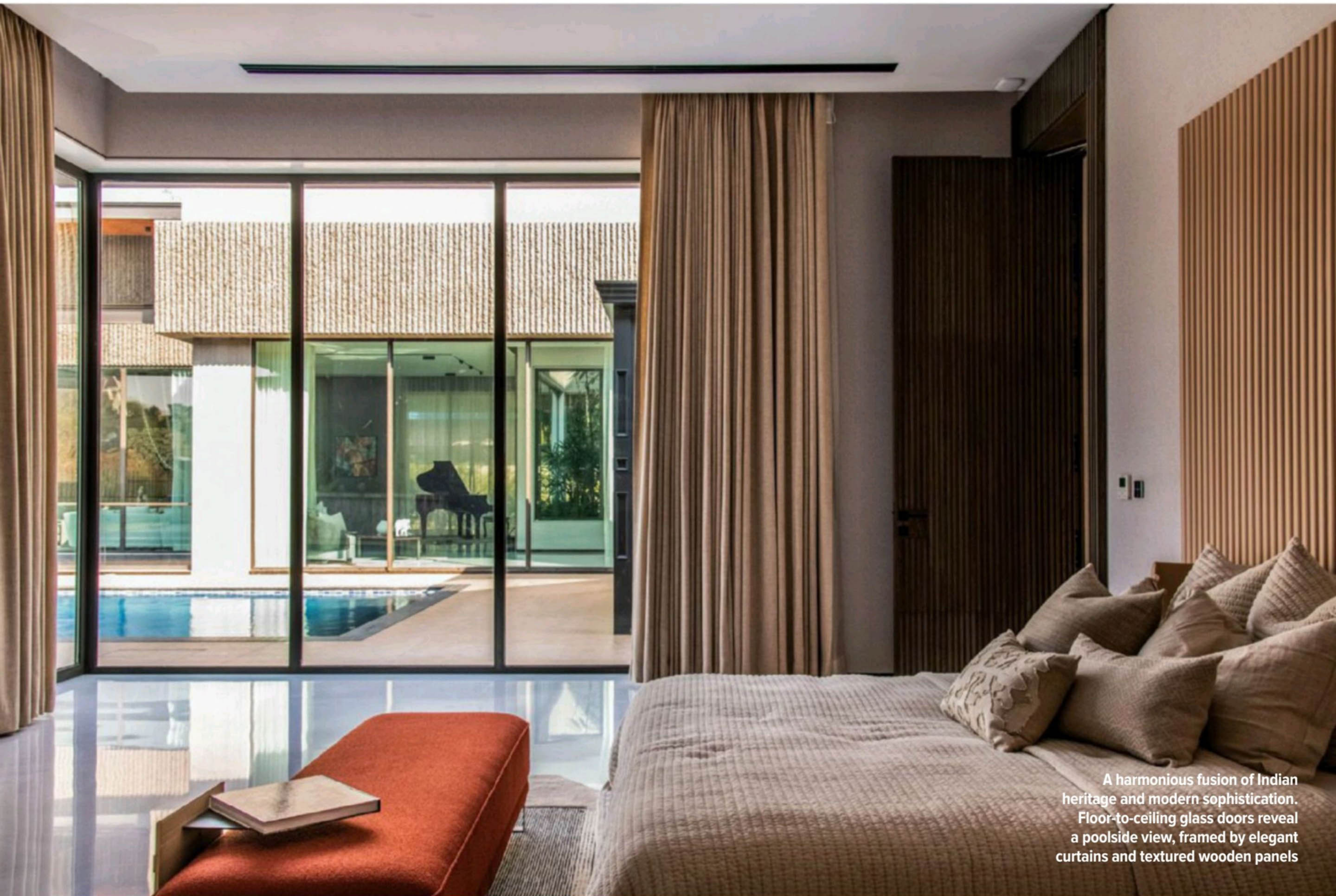
—**MONICA CHAWLA**, Creative Head, Essentia Environments

The Essentia Experience Center is less of a showroom and more of a journey, an immersive environment where design narratives unfold with theatrical grace. The space is a living expression of form, scale, and tactility





This bedroom by Essentia Environments exemplifies Indian craftsmanship with global elegance. The minimalist yet opulent design features a sleek bed adorned with a curated stack of neutral-toned cushions and a textured taupe bedspread, reflecting their commitment to quality materials and thoughtful detailing.



A harmonious fusion of Indian heritage and modern sophistication. Floor-to-ceiling glass doors reveal a poolside view, framed by elegant curtains and textured wooden panels.



This residence at DLF Camellias is a celebration of refined living, built with a philosophy that balances restraint and richness. Thoughtfully curated art, statement lighting, and sculptural furniture bring soul and structure to each corner

Kashish Kaushal (KK): In all your interviews over the years, what's one question you've never been asked but wish someone would? And how would you answer today?

Hardesh Chawla (Hardesh): At Essentia, we work with a very niche clientele, individuals who are already part of the top 1%, sometimes even the top 0.5%. For them, the basic, functional needs of a home or space are already met, often personally and meticulously. So, for us, the goal isn't just to deliver functionality; it's to go far beyond that.

Every product we design, every experience we curate, is driven by one guiding purpose, to help people live beautifully. That means creating spaces and solutions that aren't just luxurious, but thoughtful, intuitive, and emotionally resonant. We ask ourselves: How can we elevate someone's everyday experience without adding complexity or stress?

That's the real essence of Essentia, to make exceptional living effortless. To bring a quiet sense of joy and ease into our clients' lives through products and services that are deeply considered, refined, and tailored. That, to me, is what we're truly here for.

KK: Essentia Environments is a name in the design industry that needs no introduction. Yet, what's one pivotal decision or moment in Essentia's journey that you've never shared publicly but was crucial to becoming the industry titan you are today?

Hardesh: That's a very important point, and one I feel strongly about. We're very aware that working with Essentia may come at a certain

price point, and yes, we might be considered expensive. But we are not costly. There's a difference. High-quality materials, impeccable craftsmanship, and truly bespoke design solutions don't come cheap, and rightly so. They carry immense value with them, and that's what we deliver.

At the same time, good work takes time. Design is not something that should be rushed. It requires a gestation period for the creative space to explore, refine, and evolve ideas. Whether it's developing variations, detailing bespoke products, or producing photorealistic renders, everything needs its own time to be done thoughtfully and thoroughly. And the same principle applies to our products, if you want something custom-made, with a high degree of finish and integrity, then it simply has to be given time to be done right.

So yes, we may not be the fastest, and we're definitely not trying to be the cheapest, but what we offer is depth, quality, and value that endures. I believe that's what sets us apart, and it's something we're very clear about from the outset.

KK: Before Essentia Environments was born in 1999, what was the most unexpected challenge or opportunity you faced that shaped your decision to dive into the design world together? Was there a defining conversation or incident that made you both say, "This is it. This is our calling"?

Hardesh: I wouldn't say it was part of some grand plan. In fact, I think it was quite a logical progression, shaped more by circumstances than



The apartment unfolds in layers of bespoke craftsmanship, handpicked materials, and signature design language

design. When we started, we weren't even setting out to build a design company. But we found ourselves being introduced to this field—and as things unfolded, it just clicked.

I believe there are two or three fundamental questions that help you figure out what you should be doing in life: What are you good at? What do you genuinely enjoy doing? And is there a market for it? Back in 1999, it became clear to us that we had all three of them.

We already had some experience doing fit-outs for spaces, and we thoroughly enjoyed the process. More importantly, the response was incredible. People who experienced our work were genuinely happy, and they were vocal about it. There was real validation, and a growing sense that there was a meaningful opportunity here.

So, in many ways, it wasn't a deliberate decision to enter this field—it was a natural outcome of what we were good at, what gave us joy, and what the market responded to. That's how Essentia came into being—not through a master plan, but through a series of moments that made perfect sense.

KK: Your first project must have been a leap of faith. Can you share a vivid anecdote from that initial project that taught you something profound about design or about yourselves as designers, something you've carried forward in every project since?

Hardesh: I remember many intense phases and honestly, some of the most valuable lessons came from the things that didn't go

well. It's not just about learning what to do—it's equally important to understand what not to do. Both shape your journey in very real ways. In the beginning, we weren't fully confident in our aesthetic voice. We often looked to others for inspiration and at times, we even followed suggestions or directions that, in hindsight, didn't truly align with our vision. That's a part of starting out—you're still figuring out your identity; your confidence builds with time and experience.

One of the approaches we adopted early on, which really helped us, was to test and try new ideas first in our own projects. That way, if something didn't land the way we imagined, the loss was contained, and we could fine-tune it without compromising a client's experience. Of course, we've made our share of mistakes—more than a few—but I don't regret any of them. Each misstep helped us grow, pushed us to evolve, and brought us closer to the clarity we have today. Those experiences are a big part of what shaped Essentia into what it is now.

KK: With over 1,000 projects under your belt, there must be one that stands out as a turning point for Essentia Environments. Can you take us behind the scenes of that project, sharing a specific moment of creative tension, triumph, or even humour? How did it redefine your approach to luxury design?

Monica Chawla (Monica): Yes, there are two moments that really stand out; both had a lasting impact on who we are and how we work today. The first was around 12–13 years ago, when DLF Magnolias was launched. We were suddenly entrusted with over 15 projects simultaneously.

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Every product we design, every experience we curate, is driven by one guiding purpose, to help people live beautifully. That means creating spaces and solutions that aren't just luxurious, but thoughtful, intuitive, and emotionally resonant.”

—**HARDESH CHAWLA**, Co-founder & Principal Designer, *Essentia Environments*



Sculptural lighting and organic greenery soften the edges in the Elan office, while clean sightlines and a restrained palette keep the space grounded

That volume and scale were unlike anything we'd handled before, and it pushed us to expand our supply base for the first time in a serious way. It was the momentum we needed, a major turning point that forced us to think bigger, plan better, and evolve our systems.

The second was during the pandemic. There was a widespread sense of uncertainty, and many around us were downsizing, expecting demand to collapse. We had a choice to make, and we took a conscious call not to scale down. We felt that doing so could severely impact the morale of our team. Instead, we decided: if demand is going to be slow for a while, let's use that time wisely. So, we focused on expanding and strengthening our supply chain. Fortunately, our instincts were right, the demand didn't crash, it rose. And because we were ready, we could meet that surge head-on. Those two moments, one driven by opportunity, the other by uncertainty — both helped shape Essentia's resilience and readiness. In the end, I believe every client and every project has played a role in building us. But these moments, in particular, gave us the confidence and clarity to move forward with purpose.

KK: Was there a project where you took a bold creative risk, perhaps a design choice or material that was unconventional at the time, that could have gone wrong but ended up becoming a hallmark of your style? What was the thought process behind that gamble?

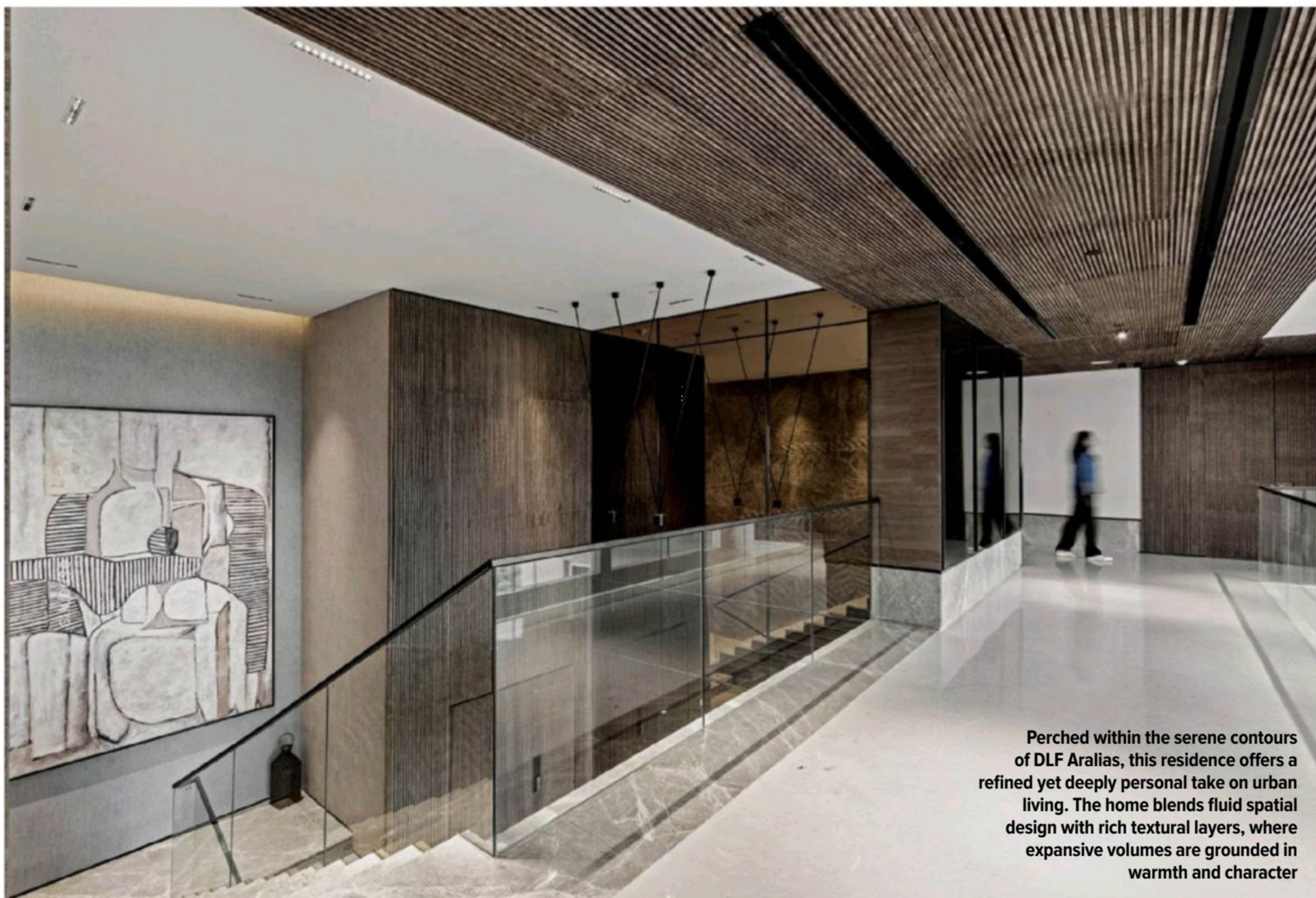
Monica: Honestly, with almost every project we've done, there's always a bit of resistance in the beginning, and that's completely natural. Everyone walks in with a certain perception of what they want their space to look like, and understandably so. But those expectations also come with budgetary and time constraints, which don't always align with the vision. One of the recurring challenges we still face today is budget expectations. Clients are often slightly optimistic. Infact, most of the time, they mentally estimate 50% or even less of what a project should realistically cost. So, one of the first conversations we have is about helping them recalibrate, either by adjusting the scope of the project or by reconsidering the budget itself. That clarity early on is essential.

The second aspect is design direction. We're quite confident in what works, both aesthetically and functionally. But clients come up with their own references and preferences, so it becomes a conversation—not a conflict, but a process of alignment. It takes some discussion to explain why we're suggesting a certain approach, and how it might serve them better in the long run. I wouldn't really call these 'challenges' in the traditional sense, they're more like essential dialogues. These discussions help create mutual clarity and trust, which ultimately lead to better outcomes.

KK: As a husband-and-wife team, your partnership is legendary. Can you share a lighthearted or poignant story of a time when you and Monica disagreed on a design vision, and how you resolved it? What does this reveal about the unique dynamic that fuels your creative synergy?



A bold, high-contrast office where scale and materiality set the tone. Inside the Elan office, deep-veined marble wraps the floors, walls and reception counter, punctuated by glass, matte black metal and warm tan leather



Perched within the serene contours of DLF Aralias, this residence offers a refined yet deeply personal take on urban living. The home blends fluid spatial design with rich textural layers, where expansive volumes are grounded in warmth and character



Hardesh and Hridik Chawla

Hardesh: I think with any partnership, whether it's between a husband and wife or otherwise, the most important foundation is trust. And not just trust in the person's integrity, but also in their competency. That mutual trust has always existed between Monica and me, and it's what allows us to work together, even when we bring different perspectives to the table.

Monica: It's never easy for two individuals to work on the same thing and arrive at the same solutions every single time. There are bound to be differences, and to say there aren't any would be factually incorrect. That's been true for us from the beginning, and it continues to be. But we've come to see that those differences can be healthy — they bring depth and dimension to what we create.

Hardesh: Over time, we've also figured out where each of our strengths lies. Monica has an incredible eye for design and creativity—that's her domain, and she leads it. I, on the other hand, focus more on execution, efficiency, and cost management. So, when she designs something and I review it, I'm not critiquing it from an aesthetic point of view. My input is usually around how we can make it more practical or streamline it without compromising quality. Similarly, Monica doesn't get involved in commercials at all. That's something I take complete responsibility for. So, in our day-to-day functioning, we've developed a very natural and well-defined segregation of roles. Interestingly, this clarity in responsibility started even at home—our domestic life taught us early on how effective a partnership can be when duties are clearly divided based on strengths. We simply carried that learning into our professional lives, and over the years, it has become very finely tuned.

That's what makes our collaboration work—respect for each other's strengths, and trust in each other's decisions.

KK: With your son Hridik now helming Essentia Home, how has his perspective as a younger designer with a global education influenced your approach? Can you share a specific instance where his input challenged or expanded your vision in a way you hadn't anticipated?

Hardesh: Hridik, being the youngest in the team, brings with him a certain energy and enthusiasm that's very refreshing. He has a different sense of learning and operates with a kind of urgency. I often say he wants to achieve in a year what might typically take ten. And that's a good thing. It creates a healthy pressure on all of us, pushes us to move faster, to be more agile, and to relook at our timelines and objectives with a new lens.

Monica: What's been particularly valuable is his ability to streamline processes. His academic background and the way he studies and analyses things have helped us bring more efficiency into our systems. Yet, at the same time, because he's been observing us closely over the years, his thinking is very much aligned with ours.

I don't see a big difference when it comes to our beliefs or the core values that drive Essentia. That shared foundation makes working together smoother and allows us to welcome his pace and perspective without compromising on what the brand stands for.

KK: Working as a family must bring unique joys and challenges. What's an unspoken rule or ritual in your family when it comes to collaborating on design projects? Is there a moment when you realized that design wasn't just a profession but a shared family language?

Monica: I think there's a bit of a misconception about design that it's something you sit at a table and sketch or plan. I don't quite agree with that. For me, design is everywhere. It's in the smallest of things we do every day, from how you arrange your bedcovers and cushions, to how your closet is organized, or how your living room feels when you walk in. Even the way you build your life, the choices you make, the balance you seek, that too, in its own way, is a form of design.

Hardesh: I don't think the real question is about design vs. no design. It's always about good design versus bad design. Design surrounds all of us—not just people in this field, whether we're conscious of it or not. Naturally, when we're together as a family, especially those of us involved in Essentia, our conversations often revolve around design. It's something that flows into our day-to-day discussions without us even trying. But there's one unspoken rule — when my younger son is around, we make it a point to not talk about work. That boundary helps us stay connected as a family beyond just our professional lives.

KK: Walk us through a day in your life when you're in the thick of a major project. What's the one routine or a morning habit, a mid-project ritual, or a late-night reflection that keeps you grounded and inspired

Hardesh: Monica and I are quite different in how we approach inspiration and work. She needs time for reflection and introspection—she prefers to be on her own, letting ideas simmer and evolve at their own pace. I, on the other hand, find my energy and inspiration in being around the team. Collaborating, brainstorming, problem-solving together—that's what drives me.

Monica: That's really the key difference between us. But what's common is that both of us think about work far more than we probably should—it's constantly present in our minds, whether consciously or in the background.

Hardesh: Over the last couple of years, my focus has shifted more towards building systems and processes that allow the team to function independently. We've established the what and how quite clearly—and now, I'm looking at how we can scale that, expand our scope, and move faster and more efficiently. My side is largely about growth and execution.

“

For me, design is everywhere. It's in the smallest of things we do every day, from how you arrange your bedcovers and cushions, to how your closet is organized, or how your living room feels when you walk in. Even the way you build your life, the choices you make, the balance you seek, that too, in its own way, is a form of design.”

—**MONICA CHAWLA**, Creative Head, Essentia Environments

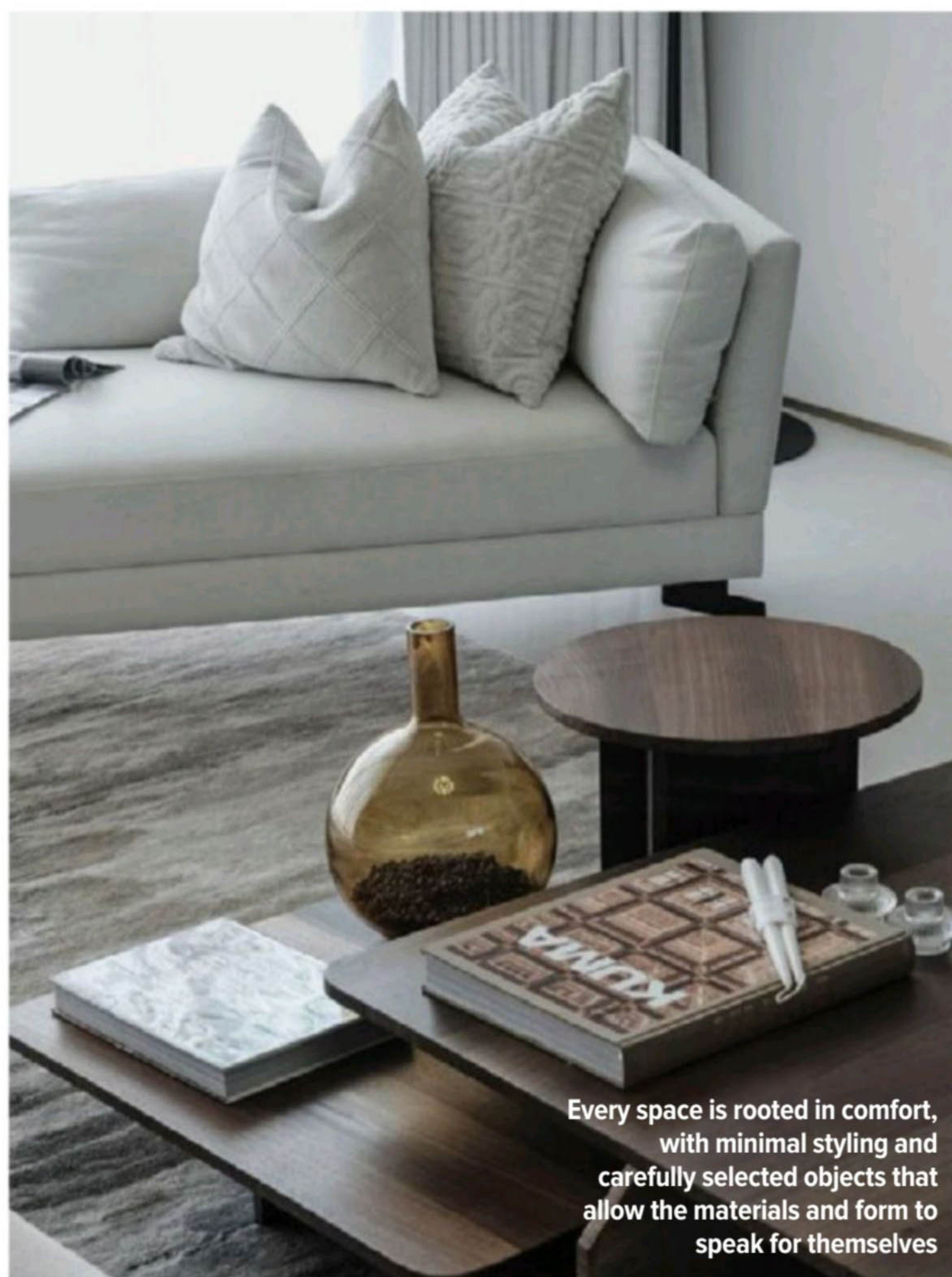
“

In India, our craftsmen are incredibly skilled. The way they work with materials is exceptional. At Essentia, we combine the best of both worlds—precision through machinery and character through handcrafted details. That blend adds depth and uniqueness.”

—**HARDESH CHAWLA**, Co-founder & Principal Designer, Essentia Environments



A soft, tonal home where natural light and layering do the heavy lifting. The palette moves between muted greys, warm neutrals and deep browns, brought to life through textured fabrics, sculptural furniture and clean architectural lines



Every space is rooted in comfort, with minimal styling and carefully selected objects that allow the materials and form to speak for themselves

Monica’s focus, as always, remains rooted in design—from aesthetics to sensibility—not just in projects, but even in products. Her attention is on maintaining and evolving our design language, making sure it stays strong and authentic.

Even in our daily rhythms, we differ. Monica’s an early sleeper and an early riser—her mornings are when she reflects and thinks deeply about her work. I’m the opposite—night is when I pause, think, and plan ahead. In that sense, we complement each other—different styles, different timings, but both aligned in vision.

KK: You’ve spoken about luxury being a necessity, not a privilege. In today’s world, where sustainability and minimalism are reshaping design, how do you see the concept of luxury evolving in India and globally? What’s one trend you’re excited about and one you’re skeptical of?

Hardesh: Luxury is often misunderstood as being synonymous with

price—and while cost can sometimes be a factor, it’s not the defining element. For me, one of the most important components of luxury is personalisation. True luxury is when something is designed specifically for you, tailored to your lifestyle, your preferences, your needs. That makes it deeply personal—and that, to me, is the essence of luxury.

If I had to break it down, I believe there are five key attributes that make something luxurious: it should serve a function well, be rare or uncommon, be of high quality, feel personalised, and most importantly, carry a certain perception of extravagance in your own mind. That perception varies from person to person—and that’s what makes it so special. Sometimes, less is more. People often tend to buy more than they need—but many of those things aren’t of the best quality. I believe true comfort lies in owning fewer things but ensuring that each one is of exceptional quality. That mindset not only brings more joy, it’s also more sustainable.



QUICKTAKES

with

Hardesh & Monica Chawla

■ **What's one design trend or item you secretly love but would never admit to using in an Essentia project?**

Hardesh: I am not sure it's ever going to happen. If we like a trend and use it ourselves, we will definitely use it in our clients' projects.

Monica: Agreed, we don't like keeping secrets!

■ **It's 2 a.m., and inspiration strikes—what's the weirdest place or thing that's ever sparked a design idea for you?**

Monica: For me, please flip the question from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. Inspiration strikes when I have had my cup of coffee and I am at the gym, probably while walking on the treadmill. Sometimes, it even strikes when I am alone. I can literally daydream about a plan or concept.

Hardesh: A lot of ideas come to me when I am deciding what to watch on TV or mindlessly scrolling, or even at the gym at 2 a.m.

■ **What's a non-design skill you're secretly proud of that your clients would be shocked to know about?**

Monica: I am a people person; not an extrovert but I can empathise very well.

Hardesh: I make friends easily. It comes naturally to me, and this quality has actually helped me establish trust amongst our clientele, which is very vital in our field.

■ **What's the funniest design argument you've ever had, and who won?**

Monica: Of course, me, who else?

Hardesh: Nods his head in agreement. She wants 'Gabbar' that too alive!

■ **If you could swap roles on a project for a day—Hardesh as Monica, Monica as Hardesh—what's the first thing you'd do differently?**

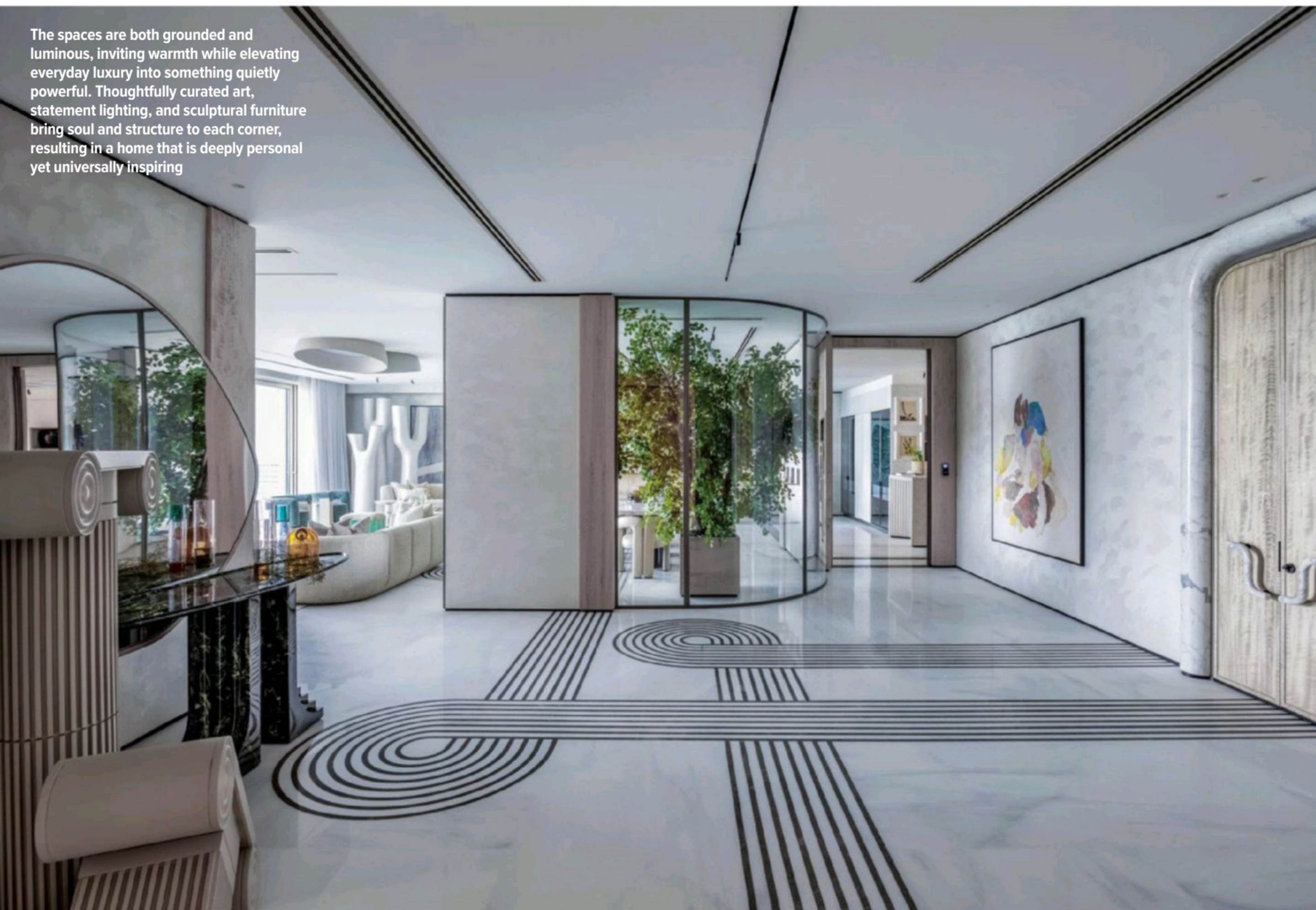
Monica: I can't do his job. PERIOD.

Hardesh: I wouldn't survive a day if I did what she does. We are both suited for what we do.

This residence at DLF Camellias is a celebration of refined living, built with a philosophy that balances restraint and richness, the apartment unfolds in layers of bespoke craftsmanship, handpicked materials, and signature design language



The spaces are both grounded and luminous, inviting warmth while elevating everyday luxury into something quietly powerful. Thoughtfully curated art, statement lighting, and sculptural furniture bring soul and structure to each corner, resulting in a home that is deeply personal yet universally inspiring



“

Our vision is to expand Essentia both nationwide and internationally. We're actively bringing more designers under our umbrella and building a stronger distribution and supply network to support this growth. On the project front, we're looking to move beyond private residences and enter public spaces—creating legacy projects that are timeless, visible, and accessible to all.”

—MONICA CHAWLA, Creative Head, Essentia Environments

Speaking of sustainability, it's not just about choosing green materials — that's of course important — but I believe it's even more crucial to focus on using less right from the beginning of a project. Good design doesn't always cost more; in fact, it often costs less because it eliminates unnecessary things. By streamlining and simplifying, you reduce waste, cut down on costs, and make well-designed spaces more accessible to a broader audience.

I also believe in staying rooted to what's local. I don't see the need to use imported materials like African timber just to create the impression of grandeur. In fact, 99% of the marble we use is Indian marble. We also produce high-quality furniture in-house, which allows us to maintain both craftsmanship and sustainability. Luxury, to me, isn't about excess—it's about thoughtfulness.

At the end of the day, luxury is for everyone to enjoy. For me, it's anything that elevates all your five senses—what you see, touch, hear, smell, and even feel emotionally. When design touches all of those, it becomes something truly special. That is what I call luxury.

KK: Essentia Home emphasises a “Made in India” ethos with a global design language. What's a specific cultural element or craft from India that you believe is underappreciated in the global design scene, and how are you championing it in your work?

Monica: Globally, most interior products are machine-made, especially in countries like Italy, Turkey, and China, which account for 70–80% of the market. With access to scale, they've invested in advanced machinery, and thanks to strong design heritage—especially in Europe—their products are widely preferred. But for us, true luxury always includes a human touch. Whether in fashion or interiors, anything handmade carries soul, individuality, and a story. That's what elevates a product.

Hardesh: In India, our craftsmen are incredibly skilled. The way they work with materials is exceptional. At Essentia, we combine the best of both worlds—precision through machinery and character through handcrafted details. That blend adds depth and uniqueness. For example, while tiles or laminates are uniform, natural marble varies from slab to slab. That variation is a luxury. Sadly, handmade work is often more celebrated abroad than here—but I believe it should be a point of pride. A product made by hand isn't just functional; it's personal—and that's the essence of luxury.

KK: You've noted that technology serves design, not the other way around. What's one emerging technology that you're experimenting with or curious about, and how do you ensure it

doesn't overshadow the human touch in your designs?

Hardesh: Technology, to me, is simply a tool—an enabler. Around 30 or 40 years ago, we worked with blueprints drawn by hand. Today, that process has been replaced by advanced software and digital tools. But at its core, the role of technology remains the same: to support and enhance what we do. It doesn't replace the creativity, intuition, or thinking of a designer or architect — it just complements it. Technology helps us work faster, visualize better, and execute with more precision. But the soul of the design still comes from the human mind. It's there to make the process more efficient, not to take it over.

KK: With Essentia Home's recent launch and your 25-year legacy, what's one audacious goal you're setting for the next decade? Is there still a dream project to achieve?

Monica: Our vision is to expand Essentia both nationwide and internationally. We're actively bringing more designers under our umbrella and building a stronger distribution and supply network to support this growth. On the project front, we're looking to move beyond private residences and enter public spaces—creating legacy projects that are timeless, visible, and accessible to all.

Hardesh: At the same time, we're working to broaden our audience by making affordable luxury a reality. We're focusing on economies of scale and exploring alternative materials to bring costs down without compromising design or quality. In the next 10 years, we see Essentia present across all major cities, serving a much wider and more diverse audience—while staying true to our design philosophy.

KK: If you could go back to 1999, when you founded Essentia, what advice would you give yourselves about navigating the design industry or balancing creativity with business? And what's one thing you did back then that you're still incredibly proud of?

Hardesh: Every day brings new challenges, problems to solve, decisions to make, and there are moments when I reflect on how things could have been done differently. If I had the benefit of hindsight, I would have moved faster. What we've achieved in 25 years, perhaps we could have done in 10. That said, I'm proud of the journey. Especially seeing the younger generation take a more aggressive and ambitious approach, it's inspiring.

While methods may have evolved, our core values haven't changed. From day one, we've been committed to aligning our interests with our clients', and that principle still guides us today. If there's one quality I value most in this journey, it's perseverance, and that's something I take great pride in. ✚

A+ IN TIMELESS FORM

PROJECT: PLUS, Panchkula; **ARCHITECT:** Aman Aggarwal; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Callejas Javier

Charged Voids' PLUS transforms a mixed-use pharmaceutical hub into a sculptural icon. Its bold brick cross form marries retail dynamism, logistic efficiency, and serene offices, redefining industrial architecture with timeless craft

Text by: Kashish Kaushal



PLUS is a love letter to architecture's power to elevate the everyday. Aman Aggarwal's vision transforms a pharmaceutical hub into a sculptural landmark that pulses with life in Panchkula's industrial landscape



Each of the corner entries is conceived as a subtracted volume. These recesses are enclosed in glass, introducing transparency that acts as display frontage, enhancing their visibility from the exterior

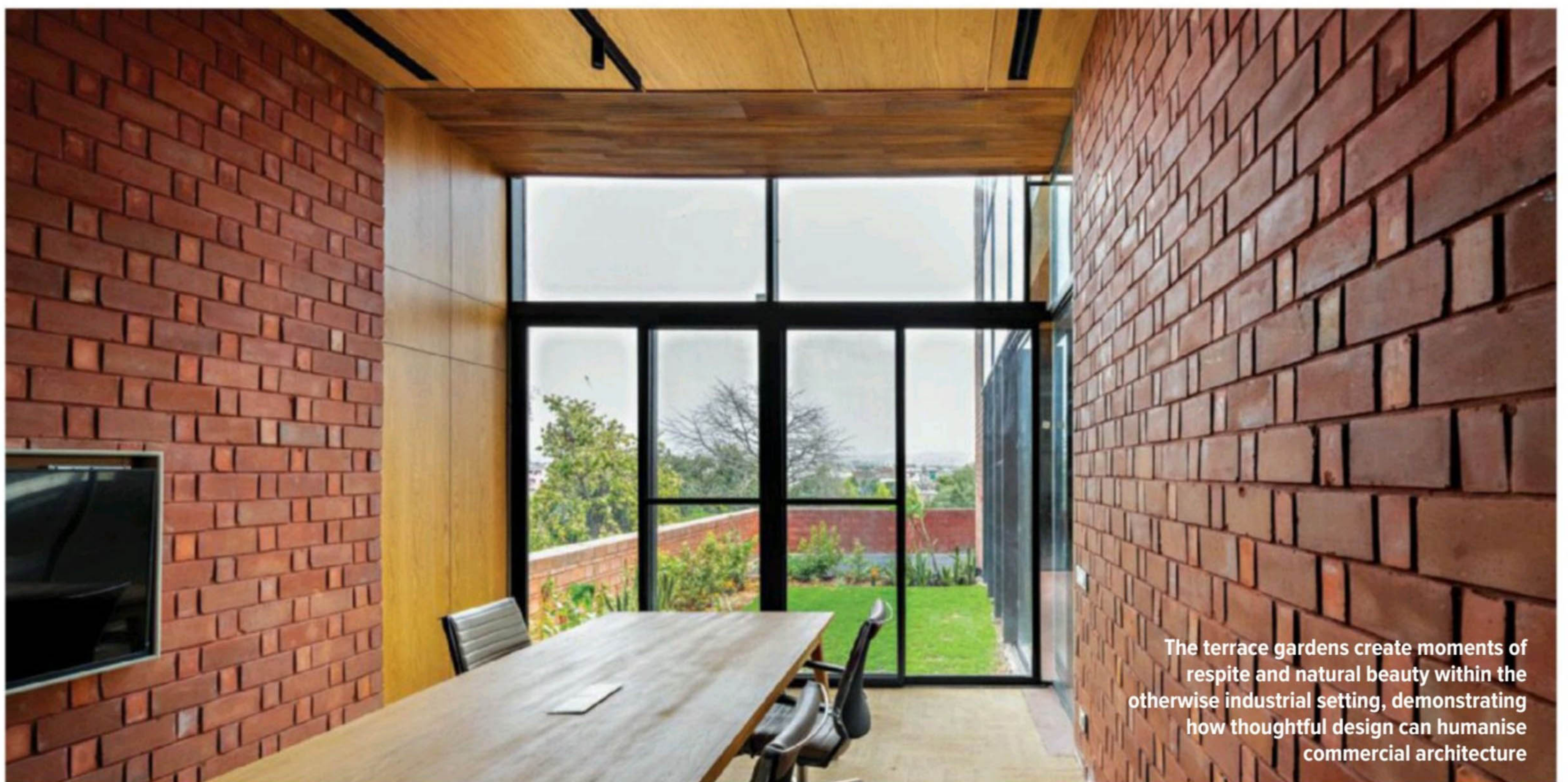


Traditional and experimental bonds articulate vertical and horizontal axes of the cross-shaped mass, adding depth and texture





Walking through the Plus building reveals how its bold exterior form translates into interior experience. The generous floor heights throughout create a sense of spaciousness that enhances both retail and office environments



The terrace gardens create moments of respite and natural beauty within the otherwise industrial setting, demonstrating how thoughtful design can humanise commercial architecture

There are buildings that harbour function, and then there are some buildings that revamp function into art. The PLUS building by Charged Voids belongs to the latter category. Standing in Panchkula's industrial belt, this noteworthy structure announces itself from the first glance—a massive red brick cross elevated on a dark plinth, its form so prompt that it transcends its commercial objective to become a landmark. We asked the founder of Charged Voids and lead architect Aman Aggarwal what made this building so iconic. “In most cases, I think the first impression of any building is its form. And that’s precisely what makes this building iconic; its beautiful sculptural form referencing the pharmaceutical field,” he explains. “The building is like a three-dimensional plus, a plus in the plan, in the elevations. It almost stands like a beautiful red brick sculpture on a black stone pedestal.” As we

embark on a virtual tour, PLUS unfolds as a comprehensive mixed-use facility for a pharmaceutical company, integrating storage, logistics, offices, and retail within its cohesive architectural envelope. However, the true brilliance of the plus configuration becomes apparent through its multiple access points and circulation patterns.

Each of the building's four corners serves as a distinct user group. Retail customers enter from the front left corner, immediately engaging with the commercial program at street level. Logistics personnel access their domain through the front right corner, descending to the operational heart of the building. Office workers enter from the rear right, ascending to their workplace environment above. Meanwhile, delivery vehicles approach from the rear left, accessing the loading dock without disrupting pedestrian circulation. This four-corner strategy transforms what could have been a chaotic mix of uses into an elegant dance of specialised movement patterns.

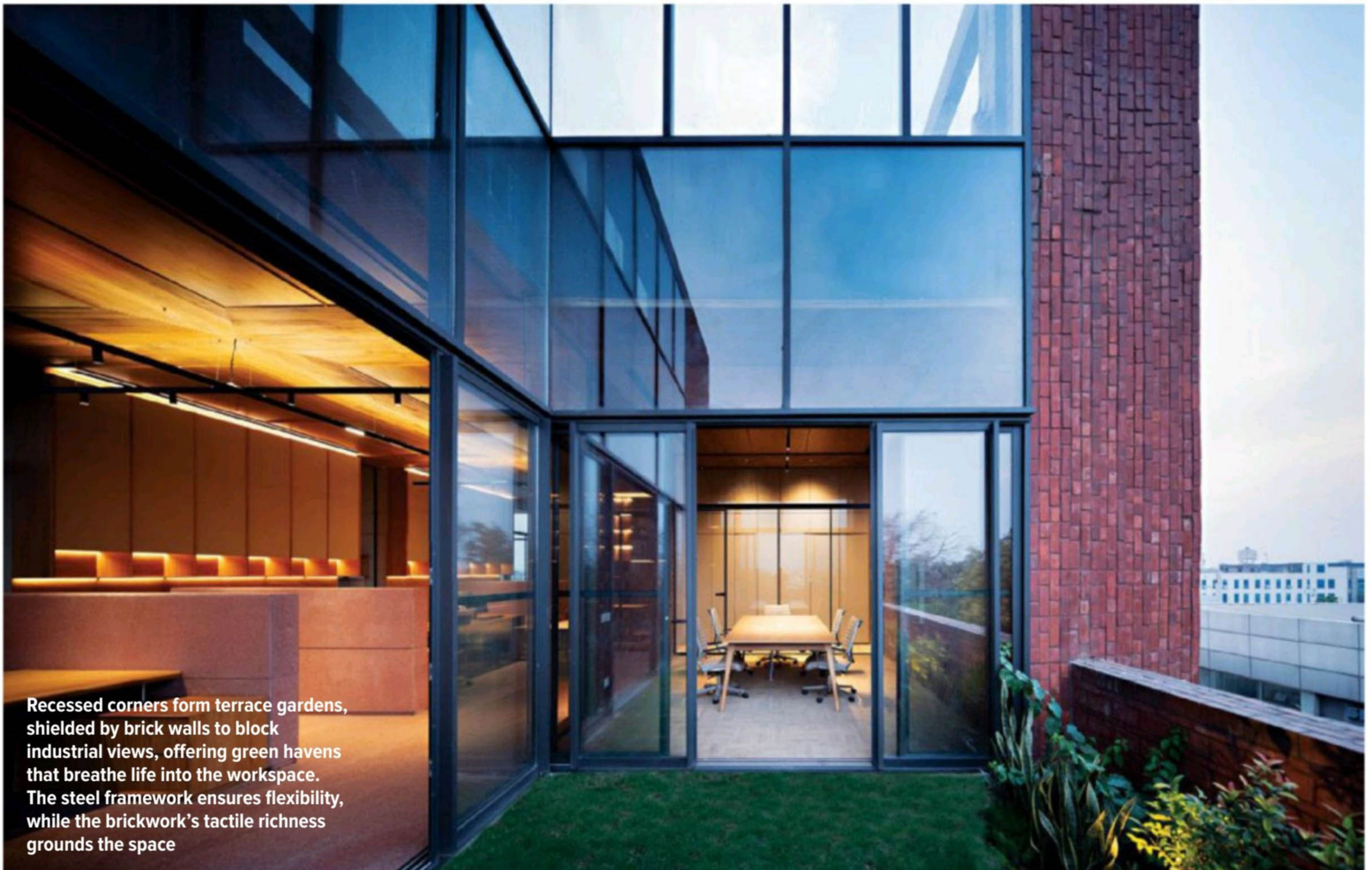


AMAN AGGARWAL

Principal Architect, Charged Voids

Aman Aggarwal, the visionary Principal Architect at Charged Voids, embodies the essence of architectural brilliance and innovation. Leading this internationally acclaimed architecture and design practice from the vibrant city of Chandigarh, India, Aman's design philosophy is a testament to the rich tapestry of influences that have shaped his thinking. Trained under the late Pritzker Prize-winning architect BV Doshi and grounded in the core principles of modernism by the iconic Le Corbusier, Aggarwal seamlessly weaves tradition and modernity into his creations.

The free structural corners maintain the spatial openness essential to the building's function while emphasizing the cross configuration that gives the building its name and identity



Recessed corners form terrace gardens, shielded by brick walls to block industrial views, offering green havens that breathe life into the workspace. The steel framework ensures flexibility, while the brickwork's tactile richness grounds the space



The cross form's free corners maintain openness, while the brick's heritage-inspired texture ties PLUS to India's architectural soul, creating a workplace that feels both intimate and transcendent, a true icon of purposeful design

“The building is like a three-dimensional plus, a plus in the plan, in the elevations. It almost stands like a beautiful red brick sculpture on a black stone pedestal.”

—AMAN AGGARWAL, *Founder, Charged Voids*

“This form is not whimsical; it justifies its function,” notes Aman.

Descending to the lower ground and basement, a dedicated stair at the front right leads to a loading/unloading dock and logistics office, supported by a steel structure that creates vast, column-free spans. The brick envelope, with its insulating prowess, wraps these spaces, while porous jaalis soften the industrial edge with light and ventilation. “The beautiful brick envelope enhances the sculptural quality,” Aman reflects, highlighting how the material’s texture and thermal performance elevate even the most utilitarian spaces into something poetic and enduring. Ascending to the first floor, the recessed corners form terrace gardens. Shielded by brick walls to block industrial views, they offer green havens that breathe life into the workspace. The steel framework ensures flexibility, while the brickwork’s tactile richness grounds the space. The virtual tour culminates on the second floor, where management offices exude serenity. Glazed terrace gardens at

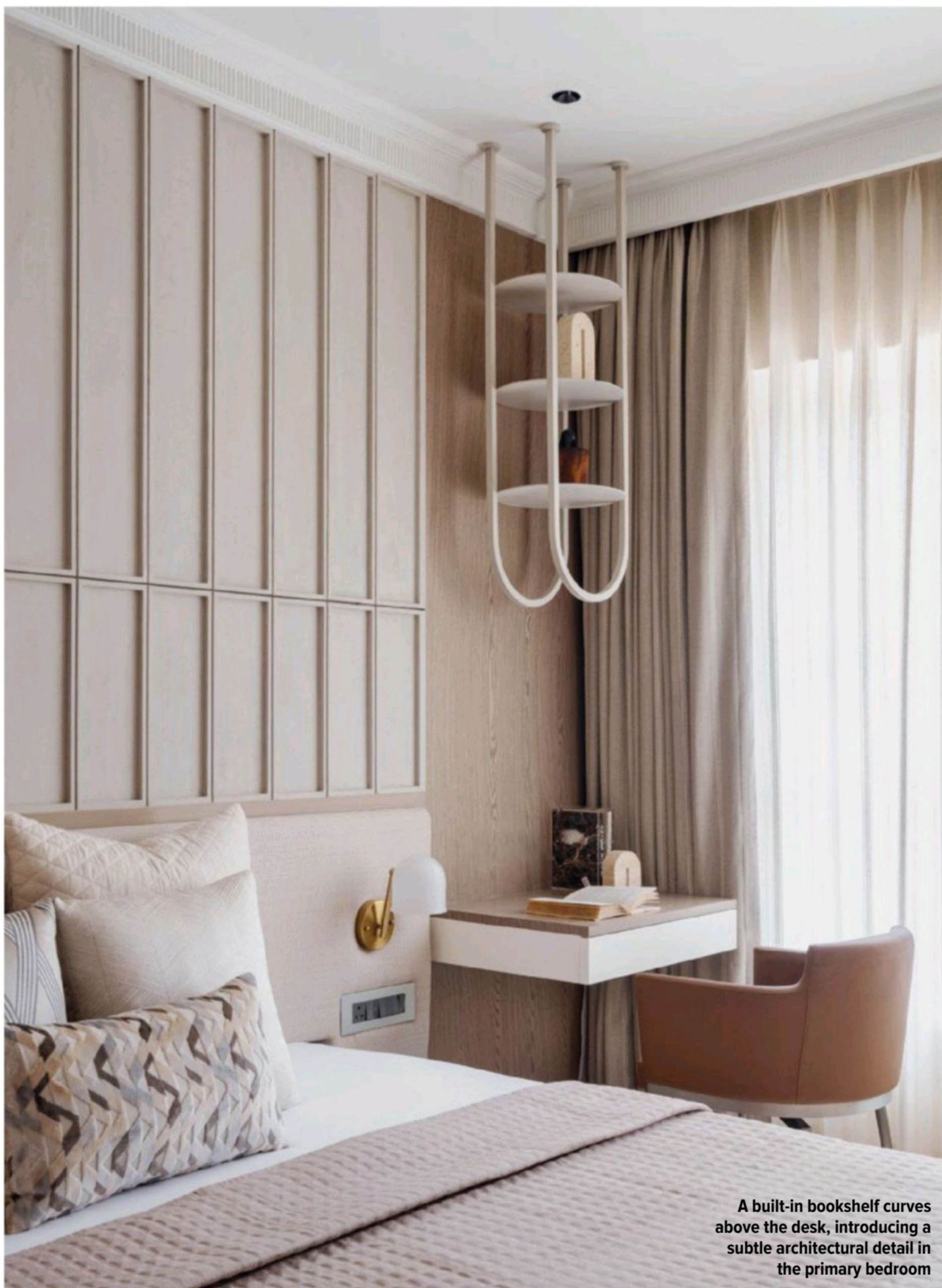
the corners open to expansive sky views, flooding the space with soft light filtered through jaalis. “The stepped terrace gardens bring nature into the office,” says Aman, underscoring how these green pockets foster calm and creativity.

In conclusion, the route from project brief to final execution doesn’t need to be a compromise between functionality and aesthetics. PLUS makes a compelling case for architectural ambition, and it personifies a union that achieves both in equal measure, creating architecture that works as brilliantly as it appears. . ✚

FACTFILE

Typology: Mixed use **Project:** “PLUS” **Location:** Panchkula
Architectural Firm: Charged voids **Lead Architect:** Aman Aggarwal
Built-Up Area: 2890 Sq mt **Plot Area:** 1050 Sq mt **Year of Completion:** 2025

Project Features



A built-in bookshelf curves above the desk, introducing a subtle architectural detail in the primary bedroom

REPEAT AS RULE

PROJECT: Casa Bella, Mumbai; **INTERIOR DESIGNERS:** Studio Rohini Bagla; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Sagar Mandal

This city home by Rohini Bagla leans into repetition and proves that sameness, too, can hold power



A textured wall with an abstract biophilic motif anchors the living area, layering nature into the warm palette of beige, brown and cream

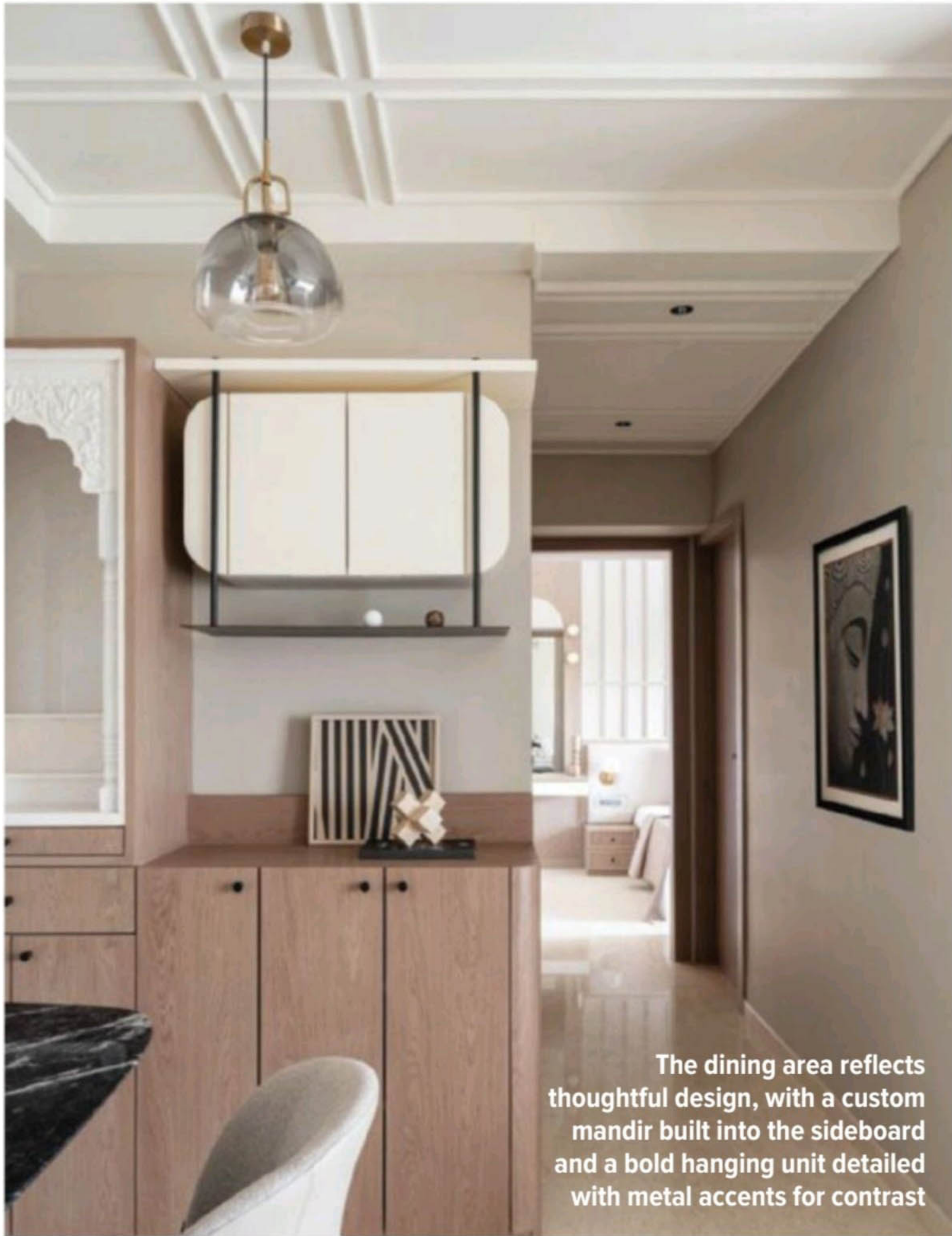


A stone-clad TV panel grounds the space, adding weight while staying true to the room's palette



ROHINI BAGLA, Founder & Principal Interior Designer, Studio Rohini Bagla

Studio Rohini Bagla is a Mumbai-based interior design firm known for its minimalist and personalized approach to design, focusing on creating spaces that are both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Led by Rohini Bagla, the studio has completed over 250 projects, ranging from residential to commercial spaces, and is recognized for its attention to detail and ability to translate clients' personalities into their living and working environments.



The dining area reflects thoughtful design, with a custom mandir built into the sideboard and a bold hanging unit detailed with metal accents for contrast



The kid's room introduces colour into the overall palette, using yellow and grey tones that remain close to the neutral scheme



Pattern is introduced through recurring details rather than prints or ornamentation, with grooves, curved corners and fluted panels used throughout the space



The artwork is personal, yet aligned with the overall mood. Materials and shapes are repeated throughout to create visual continuity

Textured ceilings carry through every room. Artwork is personal but selected to match the mood. Materials repeat. Shapes repeat. Even the light feels paced. This isn't a showpiece home. It doesn't want to be. Casa Bella works because it picks a few things, curves, grooves, soft corners and just sticks with them.

This isn't a house that relies on bright colour or big gestures. There's no bold tile in the kitchen, no oversized art making a scene. What you get instead is structure. Rohini Bagla doesn't design for theatrics. Neither she chases big reveals. She prefers rhythm. Her work leans on repetition, structured and intentional. At Casa Bella, a Mumbai home designed for a young couple, pattern does the heavy lifting. Not in the form of prints or ornament, but through details that return: grooves, curved corners, fluted panels.

You start to notice the repetition early. The foyer wall has grooves. The ceiling carries them forward. Curves appear once, then again, then again. Every room follows the same logic, measured, almost meditative. It begins in the foyer with vertical grooves in veneer and a circular ceiling light. From there, the design sticks to a clear script. The same palette flows through the house. The same shapes show up in different forms.

In the living room, a textured feature wall sits behind the sofa. A

stone-clad TV panel adds weight without changing the tone. Sunlight from a large window softens everything — the marble floors, the neutral furniture, the layered lighting. The dining space is tucked to one side. A sideboard and mandir share the same wall. A floating cabinet above adds storage. The metal trims are sharp but slim. Even the ceiling picks up a detail from the entrance, keeping the visual language consistent.

The primary bedroom stays in line. A bookshelf arches over the desk. The wardrobe is simple, full-height, handle-free. Everything is designed to sit unobtrusively. The walls don't change tone. The finishes don't shift. The kid's room is the one place where the palette tips into colour. Yellow and grey. Still neutral-adjacent, but lighter. The storage is built-in. A sliding wardrobe keeps the layout flexible. The floor stays open. Nothing extra.

Textured ceilings carry through every room. Artwork is personal but selected to match the mood. Materials repeat. Shapes repeat. Even the light feels paced. This isn't a showpiece home. It doesn't want to be. Casa Bella works because it picks a few things, cuves, grooves, soft corners and just sticks with them. No detours, no diversions. +

Project Features



HOUSE BY THE LAKE

PROJECT: House by the Lake, Hyderabad; **ARCHITECTS:** 23 Degree Design Shift; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Vivek Eadara, PHX India

With its low-slung roofs, shaded verandahs, open baths, and a temple tree at its heart, this tropical modernist weekend home by 23DDS—with landscaping by Studio Gaea—blurs the line between house and horizon.

By Ankita Rathod



Floating just above the ground, the house opens out to Osman Sagar with framed vistas and shaded verandahs that soften the transition between indoors and the landscape



Deep verandahs and reflecting water bodies extend the interior outward, creating a soft visual and climatic buffer between rooms and garden



Traditional patterned flooring from Bharath Floorings injects texture and craft into the otherwise pared-back interiors, echoing the spirit of Athangudi tiles



Natural stone, slate finishes, and smooth plinths define the visual language, grounding the architecture in earth-toned calm



SRIKANTH REDDY A. & NEELESH KUMAR S.

Founders, 23 Degree Design Shift

Founded by Srikanth Reddy A. and Neelesh Kumar S., Hyderabad-based 23 Degree Design Shift is known for its contextual approach, where architecture responds to terrain, light, and material with clarity and restraint. The practice often leans into tropical modernism and biophilic design, crafting spaces that are both spatially resolved and emotionally resonant. For House by the Lake, the core team—Rishika A., Manu Adityan, and Ujwala—collaborated closely to create a retreat that prioritises landscape, climate sensitivity, and a quiet kind of luxury.

Comprising four bedrooms, a spa and gym block, a home theatre, and a separate guest suite with its own bar, the house flows across interconnected pavilions and courtyards that celebrate light, breeze, and material restraint.

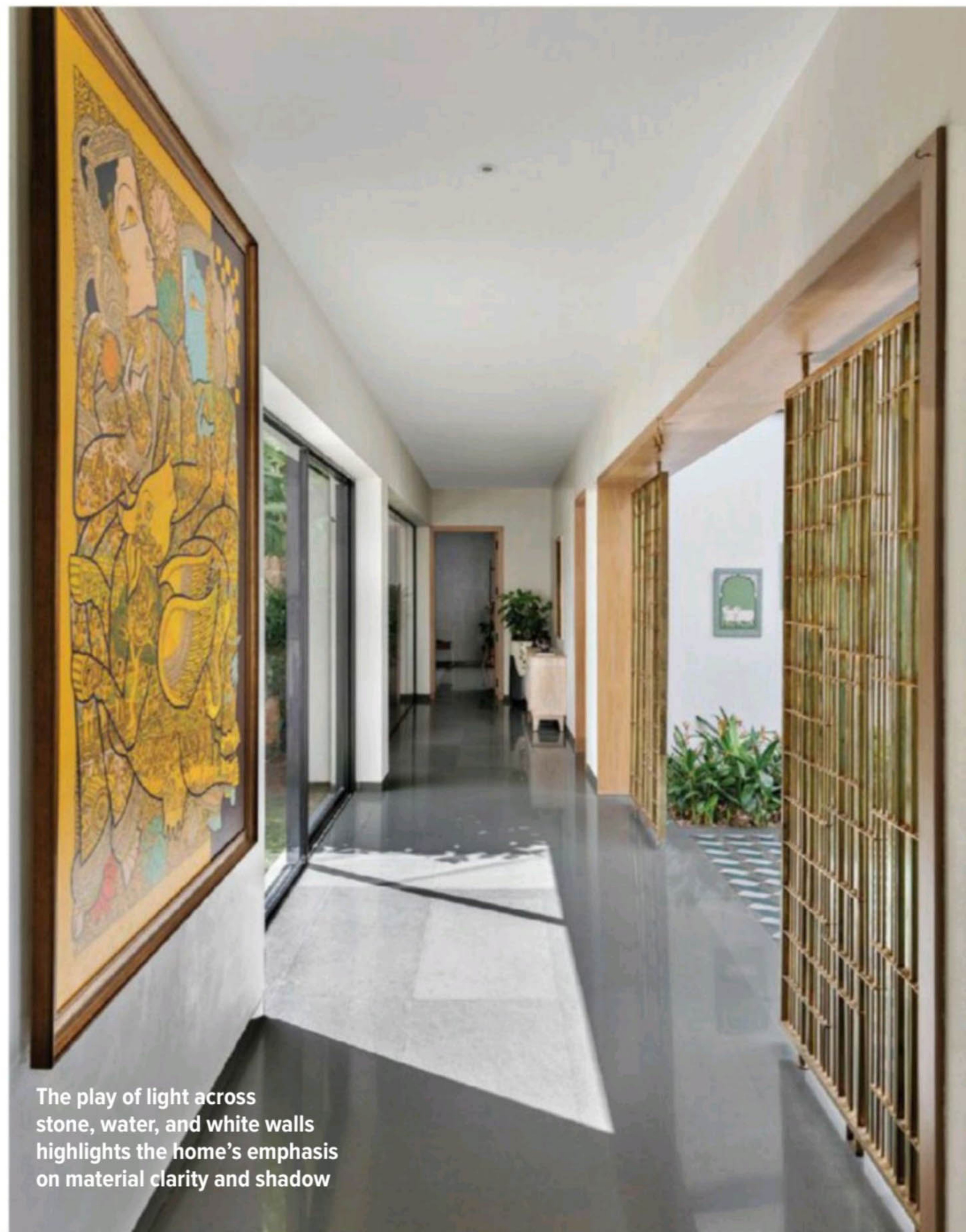
Along the calm, glinting expanse of Osman Sagar—Hyderabad’s storied reservoir in Gandipet—a weekend home by 23 Degree Design Shift (23DDS) rises in quiet dialogue with its surroundings. Set on a 1.2-acre site and measuring 10,500 sq. ft. in built area, the house is designed as a low-slung, tropical modernist residence that offers privacy, panoramic lake views, and seamless interaction with nature. Comprising four bedrooms, a spa and gym block, a home theatre, and a separate guest suite with its own bar, the house flows across interconnected pavilions and courtyards that celebrate light, breeze, and material restraint. The landscape design—developed in close collaboration with Studio Gaea—further enhances the site’s natural rhythms, creating a living tapestry around the architecture.

Instead of imposing a singular architectural mass, the plan breaks the programme into dispersed volumes—each anchored to the site through a gently ascending plinth. This base platform, ranging from 2 to 6 feet in height, not only follows the land’s natural gradient but helps differentiate functional zones while tying them together visually with water features and green interludes. Directional walls and

landscaped mounds introduce an orchestrated arrival sequence—visitors are drawn through high boundary walls, past a shaded parking bay and into an entry plaza that slowly unveils the architecture in fragments. The house finally opens out towards the northeast, framing uninterrupted views of the lake and the New City skyline.

A GRID OF TRANQUILITY

The design language draws from the grammar of tropical modernism—flat and pitched roof forms, deep overhangs, shaded verandahs, and an open plan that privileges ventilation and natural light. Set on a 20x20 ft. structural grid, the house maintains a rigorous spatial rhythm, allowing rooms to flow into one another while maintaining distinct functions. A cantilevered verandah with an 8-foot-deep slab projection screens the interiors from Hyderabad’s sun and monsoon rain, while also visually grounding the floating mass of the house. At the entry, the home is lifted by 6 inches off the plinth, which itself juts out by 6 feet toward the parking, establishing a sense of levity as one enters. The bedroom suites are divided across zones for privacy and calm—most notably, a detached guest room with an outdoor bar lounge sits quietly away from the main living block. The spa and gym block is fully embedded into the landscape and conceived as a retreat within a retreat.





the built is not a foregrounded object, but a companion to the land. In allowing the lake, the light, and the wind to lead, the house becomes what all great architecture aspires to be: a place of return.

A central courtyard with a temple tree anchors the home, acting as both sculpture and seasonal barometer.

OF STONE, LIGHT AND EARTH

The material palette leans into the region's textures and thermal needs. Diamond-polished Kota stone forms the indoor flooring, with leathered Kota extending into outdoor decks. Crisp white walls are offset by natural teakwood ceilings, while slate tiles used for both the pitched roof and adjacent water bodies create tonal cohesion. A highlight is the use of patterned flooring from Bharath Floorings, inspired by traditional Athangudi tiles—an insertion of craft into an otherwise restrained shell.

Khammam brown stone defines the plinth edges and connecting paths, directing circulation and creating tactile transitions between hardscaping and landscape. The overall effect is one of quiet minimalism—one that lets the site, not the structure, do the talking.

A LIVING LANDSCAPE

Just as thoughtfully detailed is the landscape strategy by Studio Gaea. The house is framed by trees selected for their blooms and climatic responsiveness—Indian coral (*Erythrina indica*), *Lagerstroemia speciosa*, *Cassia fistula*, and neem—establishing a flowering foreground between the built form and the lake. Coconut palms rise along the water's edge, adding vertical contrast and cooling the air naturally. Around the house, mounds are planted with *Wadelia*, chosen for its deep roots and soil-binding capacity during monsoons.

A secondary garden surrounding the spa and gym block is imagined as a pleasure path—with layered green shrubs, walkways,

and seasonal blooms creating moments of sensory pause. Planters and stone artefacts sourced from Bali are subtly placed throughout the grounds, acting as visual cues that mark transition points and corners without overwhelming the eye.

Walls clad in natural stone murals mimic lush tropical scenes, while stones embedded with leaf motifs in the entrance plaza mark the shift from architecture to garden. Courtyards, open baths, and semi-enclosed areas allow for moments of pause, reflection, and immersion in the landscape—amplifying the sense of retreat the home aspires to offer.

A FRAME FOR STILLNESS

From its strategic orientation and passive cooling systems to the tactile restraint of its material palette, House by the Lake reveals itself as an architecture of quiet confidence. It rejects spectacle in favour of sensitivity, responding not just to site but to season, mood, and memory. More than a weekend home, it is a landscape-led sanctuary—elemental in spirit, enduring in form. Here, the built is not a foregrounded object, but a companion to the land. In allowing the lake, the light, and the wind to lead, the house becomes what all great architecture aspires to be: a place of return. ✚

FACTFILE

Project: House by the lake **Location:** Gandipet, Hyderabad

Design Firm: 23 Degree Design Shift

Principal Architect/s: Srikanth Reddy, A, Neelesh Kumar.S

Design Team: Rishika. A, Manu Adityan, Ujwala

Carpet and super built up: 10,500 Sq ft **Floor:** G+1

Project Features



Designed for two brothers on an 800 sq yard plot, the villa navigates the challenge of creating two distinct yet connected homes.

As one draws closer, the tactility of the facade reveals itself: glass panels break the solidity, teasing glimpses of life inside, while perforated metal screens shift the play of light and shadow throughout the day

TWIN SOULS, SINGLE VISION

PROJECT: Twin Villa, Meerut; **ARCHITECTS:** SIAN Architects; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Ekansh Goel

Surbhi Singhal and Deepanshu Arneja craft a 15,700 sq ft residence that questions the conventional relationship between the built and natural environments, creating two different yet compatible homes wrapped in a jungle plantation embrace

Text by: Kashish Kaushal

While one half of the villa nurtures solitude through intimate corners and contemplative balconies, the other embraces togetherness in open, social layouts. The first-floor acts as a shared sanctuary, where family lounges and bedrooms retreat into framed views of the surrounding garden



“Drawing inspiration from the brief and the neighbourhood context, the design aimed to not merely embed the house but also allow it to camouflage into the surroundings. The result transcended the house from a tangible product to a feeling of a warm embrace away from their busy lives.”

—**SURBHI SINGHAL AND DEEPANSHU ARNEJA**, *Founders & Principal Architects, SIAN Architects*

The built environment and biophilia go hand in hand. Especially in exponentially developing urban contexts where the need to balance architecture with nature becomes even more critical. Following this ethos to the ‘T’ is the Twin Villa in Meerut. Designed by SIAN Architects, this 15,700 sq ft residence unfolds as a warrant for quiet luxury. If you observe from the road, Twin Villa transpires as a lesson in equilibrium; its staggered, block-like forms merge into the verdant intersection it calls home. Designed to imitate the rhythm of the surrounding parks in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, the villa’s understated facade invites intrigue without ostentation. Founders and principal architects Surbhi Singhal and Deepanshu Arneja worked around three key elements: natural light, ample ventilation, and abundant landscaping.

Elaborating on the client’s brief, they revealed, “Additionally, the design needed to address the challenge of creating two distinct yet interconnected homes, under a unified architectural vision. Drawing inspiration from the brief and the neighbourhood context, the design aimed to not merely embed the house but also allow it to camouflage into the surroundings. The result transcended the house from a tangible

product to a feeling of a warm embrace away from their busy lives.”

The landscaping makes the perfect first impression, enveloping the villa in layers of towering trees and creeping foliage. Native, non-flowering species ensure year-round vibrancy with minimal maintenance, embodying the firm’s commitment to sustainability. “We wanted the greenery to be a living boundary—protective yet inviting,” Deepanshu notes. This “jungle plantation” approach, as the architects call it, makes nature an intrinsic part of daily life, softening the transition from the outside world. However, the genius lies in the details. Metal screens along the facade filter sunlight and cast intricate patterns that shift with the day’s rhythm, serving as a canvas for verdure. “The guiding light for the overall theme of this project was an atypical take on the climate and context of North India,” explain the architects.

Stepping through the arched pergolas of the entrance, visitors are greeted by a double-height lobby where sunlight filters through cascading greenery. The space divides into two distinct narratives: to the left, a quieter zone unfolds with deep balconies extending from private rooms, creating shaded alcoves for contemplation. To the right, the villa embraces a livelier character where open-plan living areas flow effortlessly into outdoor patios and gardens.



Repurposed wood benches invite quiet moments of reflection, setting the tone for an experience rooted in nature and thoughtful design



SURBHI SINGHAL AND DEEPANSHU ARNEJA

Founders & Principal Architects, SIAN Architects

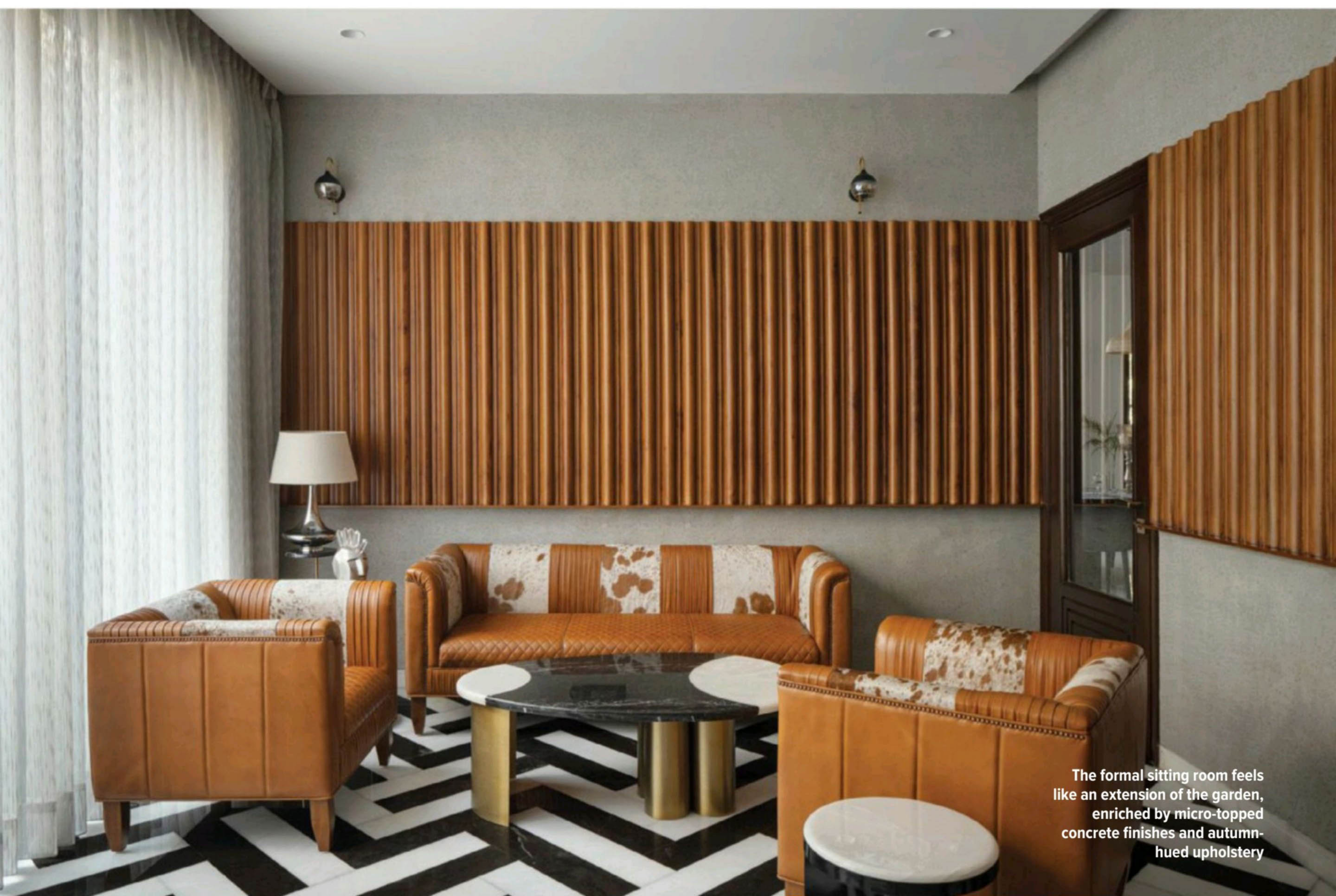
SIAN Architects is a Delhi-based design practice that aspires to create immersive architectural experiences through art and engineering. Driven by a passion for research and knowledge-sharing, the studio serves as an inclusive and constructive laboratory for new learnings and insights, fostering advancement within the industry. Founded in 2018 by Surbhi Singhal and Deepanshu Arneja, SIAN believes in the power of collaboration and an authentic design ethos to foster innovation.



Framed by the home's fluid spatial plan, the dining area sits adjacent to a quiet lounge, separated not by walls but by transparency and light. Art punctuates the space, case in point the whimsical equine sculpture or the graphic installation by the staircase, infusing a sense of personality



Bathed in natural light and dressed in warm hues, the drawing room sets the tone for the villa. Soaring to a double height, the space is framed by generous overhangs and softened by a veil of cascading greenery that tempers the harshness of sun and dust

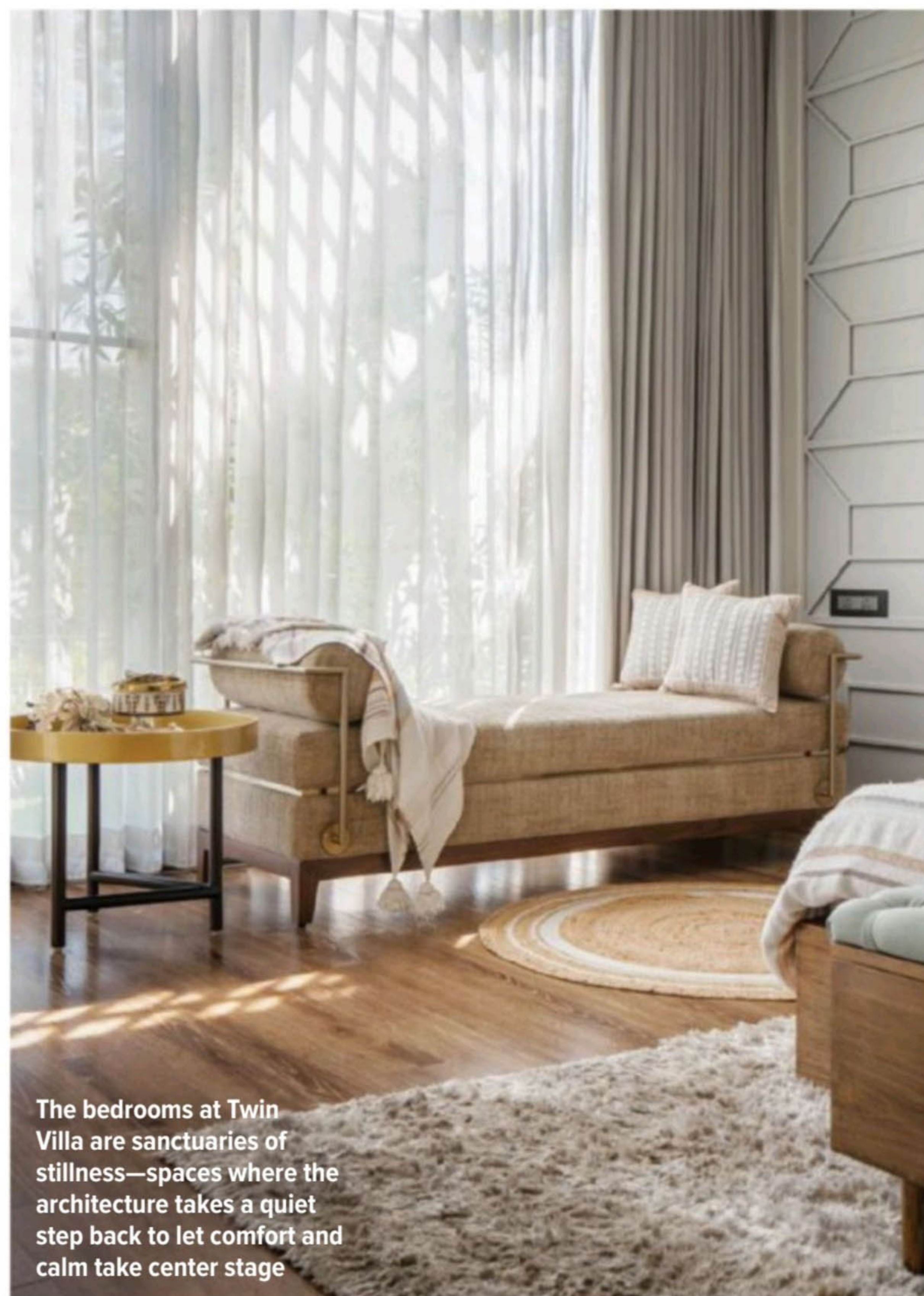


The formal sitting room feels like an extension of the garden, enriched by micro-topped concrete finishes and autumn-hued upholstery

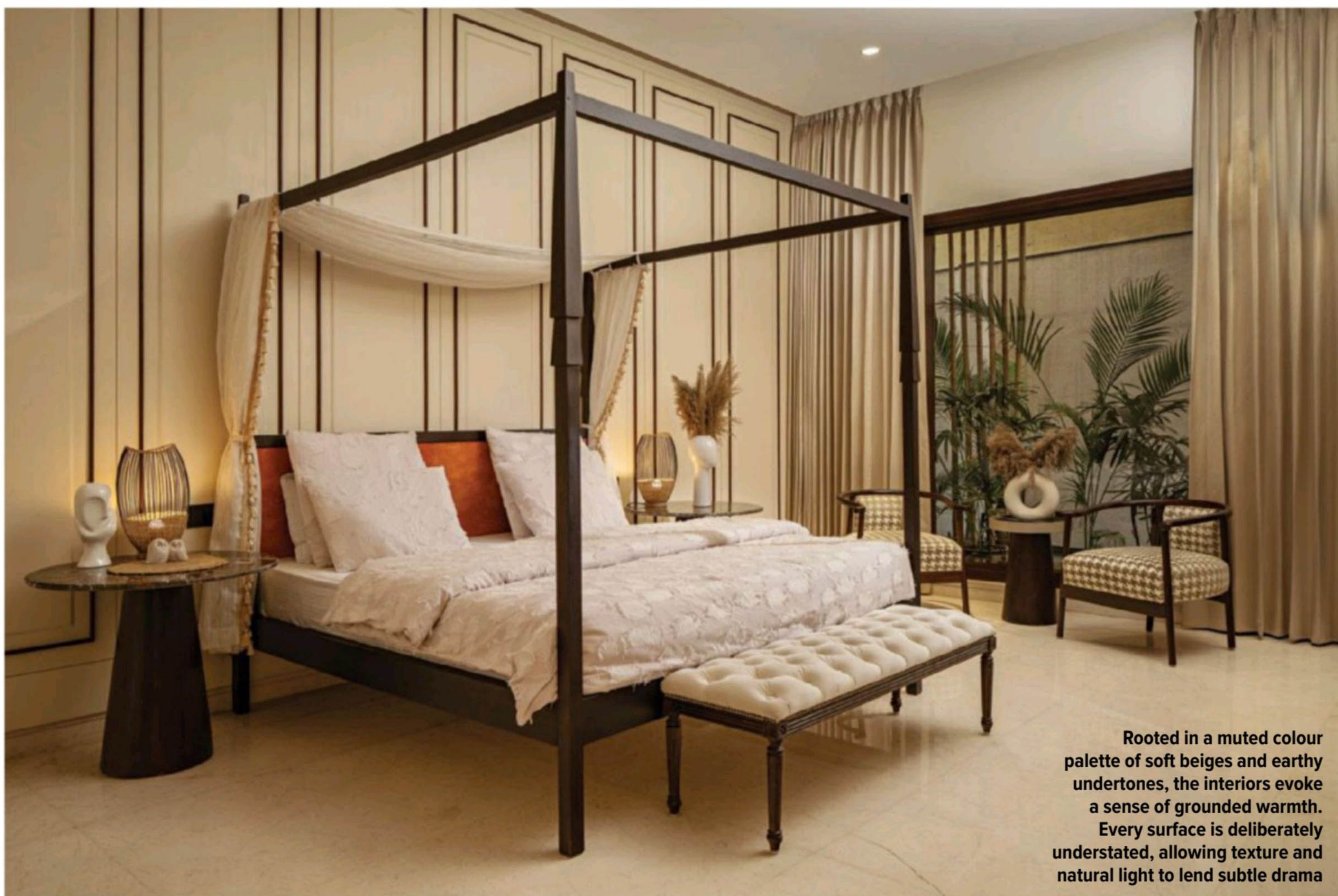




The bar, designed with reflective Indian stone flooring, rich earthy tones, and repurposed wooden battens, overlooks the verdant outdoors, offering an intimate yet vibrant space for gatherings



The bedrooms at Twin Villa are sanctuaries of stillness—spaces where the architecture takes a quiet step back to let comfort and calm take center stage



Rooted in a muted colour palette of soft beiges and earthy undertones, the interiors evoke a sense of grounded warmth. Every surface is deliberately understated, allowing texture and natural light to lend subtle drama



SECTIONS

“We wanted the greenery to be a living boundary—protective yet inviting. The guiding light for the overall theme of this project was an atypical take on the climate and context of North India.”

—**SURBHI SINGHAL AND DEEPANSHU ARNEJA**, *Founders & Principal Architects, SIAN Architects*

The material palette tells its own story of sustainability and contextual relevance. Black and grey-hued natural stone grounds the semi-open spaces, while opulent marble flooring in neutral tones enlivens the main living areas. Warm wooden flooring subtly demarcates zones, and the deliberate absence of wallpapers allows decorative wall mouldings to add depth and texture. “We believe in crafting spaces rooted in context and climate that speak and celebrate the diverse country,” the architects note, reflecting their firm’s ethos of thoughtful design beyond trends.

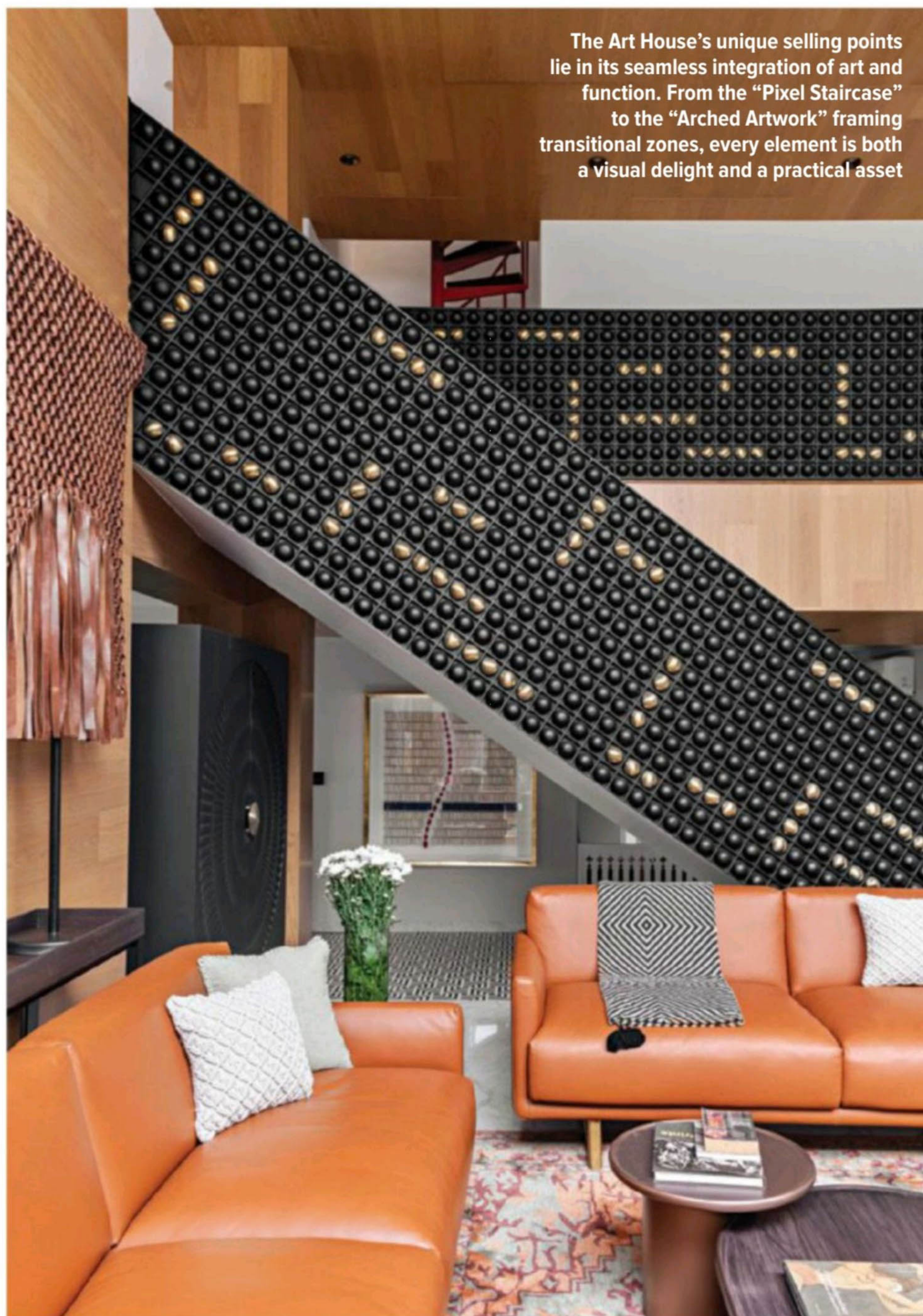
The colour palette, rooted in earthy, natural tones, creates a sophisticated foundation where greens peek indoors while earthy colours mingle. Shades of light brown, beige, and greys form the neutral base, punctuated by subtle touches of burnt orange, yellows, and olive through carefully chosen upholstery. The drawing room stands out as the architects’ favorite space. “It’s the villa’s first impression, where autumn hues meet uninhibited sunlight,” Deepanshu says. This room sets the tone, blending SIAN Architects’ ethos of context-driven design with the clients’ brief for light, ventilation, and greenery. Challenges arose in working with unpredictable stone densities, but the team’s adaptability turned limitations into opportunities, refining their approach to material innovation.

Ascending to the first floor, verandahs act as private retreats offering

framed views of surrounding greenery. The bedrooms maintain calm, uncluttered aesthetics with natural materials and muted palettes. The second-floor transforms into a space for leisure and reflection, featuring a gym block and an open-to-sky jacuzzi with panoramic views that stretch across the landscape. Sustainability is woven into the villa’s core. Rainwater conservation through dedicated pits, native plant species requiring minimal maintenance, and expansive solar panels with ‘Made in India’ technology demonstrate the architects’ commitment to environmental responsibility. Perhaps most remarkably, site debris found new life—waste wood became swings and benches; leftover stone transformed into furniture and lighting features.

“What truly sets Twin villa apart is the defining dialogue it narrates between nature and luxury living,” reflects Surbhi. This dialogue, achieved through their jungle plantation approach, creates an immersive connection that enhances daily life while balancing openness with privacy. It also poses a compelling question: what if our homes didn’t just shelter us from the world, but instead taught us how to live more peacefully within it? In its quiet elegance, Twin Villa answers: when architecture becomes a conversation rather than a statement, when homes grow rather than impose, we create spaces that nurture not just our bodies, but our souls. ✚

Project Features



LIVING WITH ART, LIVING AS ART

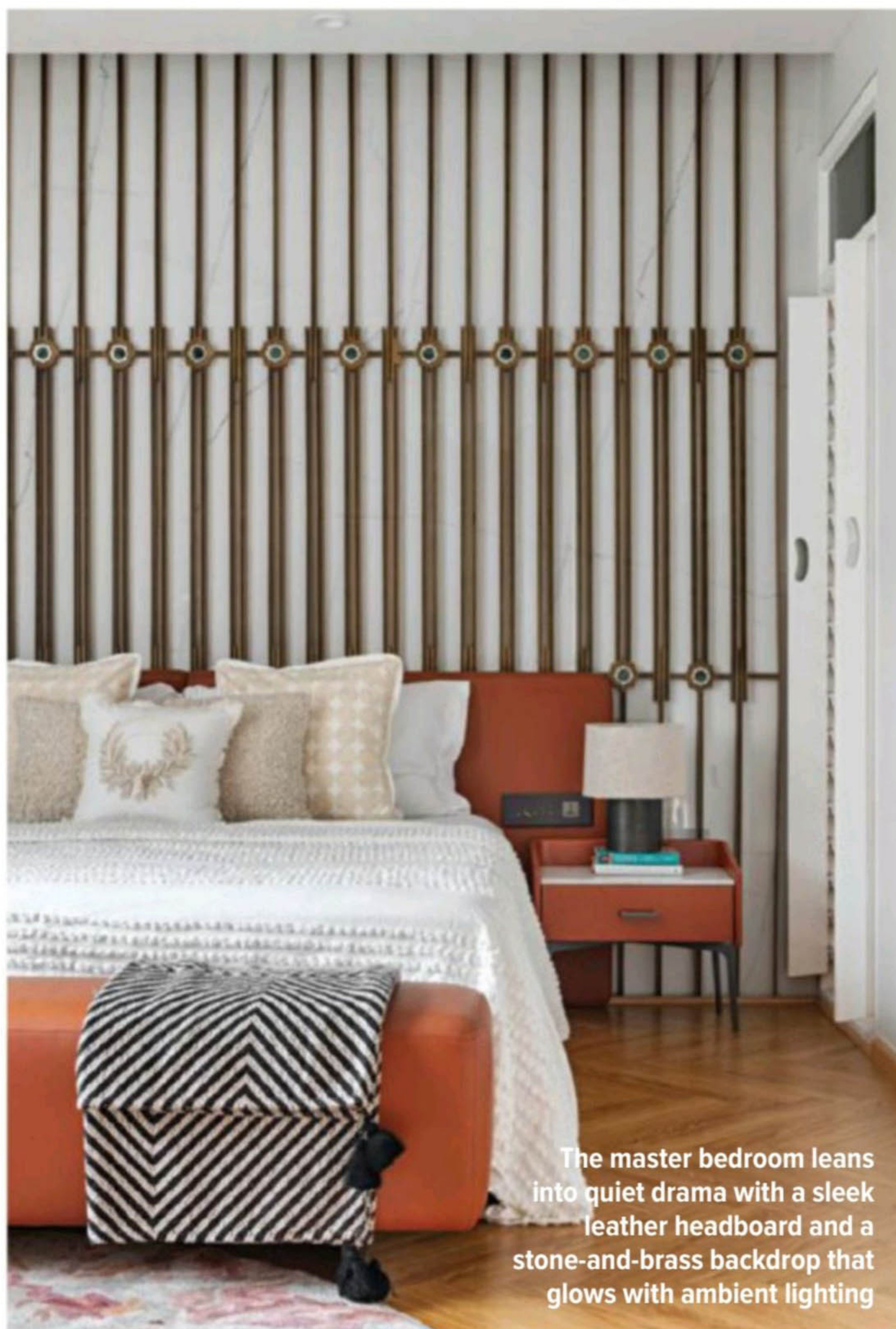
PROJECT: The Art House, Gujarat; **ARCHITECTS:** P&D Associates; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** ©Photographix

Devang Patel and Pratik Siddhpura have crafted The Art House, blurring the boundaries between sculpture and structure—a home where every wall, corner, and contour narrates a story of artful living. This eclectic haven blends modern design with traditional craftsmanship, transforming everyday spaces into a living gallery that captivates and comforts in equal measure

Text by: Kashish Kaushal



On the walls of the living area, "Nature's Abstractions"—a blend of black-and-white photography with organic textures, creates a rhythm of stillness and movement. Nearby, a leather jacket has been transformed into a wall-hung textile sculpture: a surprising moment that feels both fashion-forward and emotionally rich



The master bedroom leans into quiet drama with a sleek leather headboard and a stone-and-brass backdrop that glows with ambient lighting



A warm and earthy master wardrobe space featuring woven cane shutters, rich wooden textures, and a cozy lounge chair

“In The Art House, the balance between artistic expression and functional liveability was achieved through a curated interplay of statement pieces and subtle design interventions that respect the rhythms of daily life.”

—**DEVANG PATEL & PRATIK SIDDHPURA**, *Co-Founders & Principal Designers, P&D Associate*

The Art House doesn't merely contain art; it is art. Every surface, every transition, and every functional element has been reimagined as a canvas for creative expression by founders and principal designers Devang Patel and Pratik Siddhpura. Located in Ankleshwar, Gujarat, and spread across 4,500 sq ft, the residence is conceptualised like an art gallery while simultaneously checking all the boxes of functional design. This delicate balance has been achieved through what the designers describe as “a curated interplay of statement pieces and subtle design interventions that respect the rhythms of daily life.”

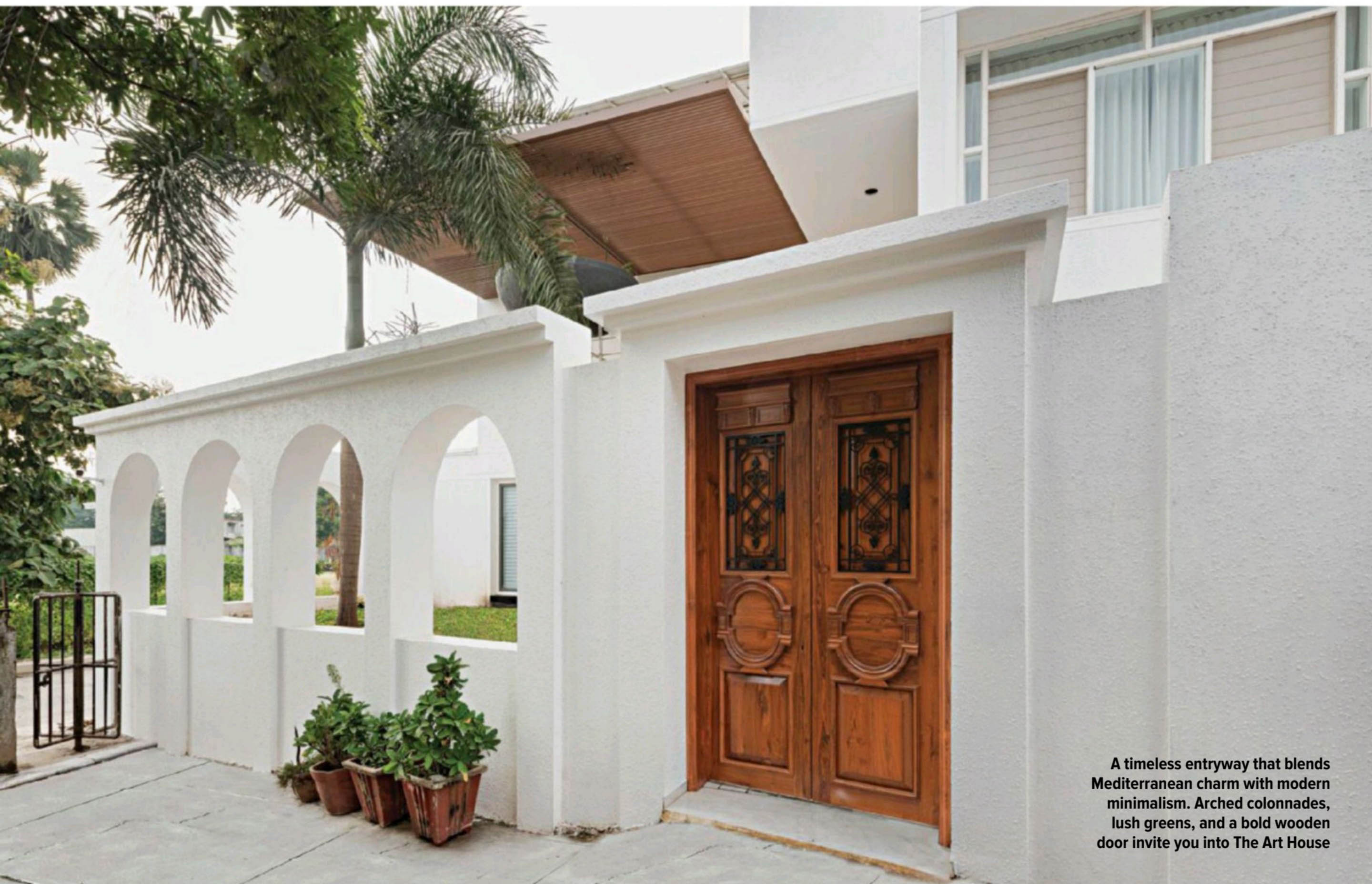
At first glance, this home grabs eyeballs as naturally as it makes your jaw drop. One can feel a spectrum of emotions like ‘awe’, ‘gasps’ and it ‘stuns’ you in the best way possible, but once you ease into it, The Art House is an epitome of utilitarian design. “Dramatic features like the ‘Crimson Cascade’ light fixture and the ‘Pixel Staircase’ transform functional element—lighting and circulation—into sculptural highlights that draw the eye and define the mood of

their spaces, yet they are positioned to ensure they don't hinder movement or usability,” elaborates Pratik.

And rightly so, when visitors step inside the living room and encounter The Art House's most dramatic gesture aka the ‘Crimson Cascade’, a red hanging lamp that flows like a sculptural waterfall, the designers' approach comes through. Fun fact! A pivotal moment occurred during its design development. The initial concept was to craft it on a dramatic, oversized scale to establish its presence as a bold, artistic statement. However, as the team explored early digital models and mock-ups, it became evident that the exaggerated proportions, though visually arresting, threatened to overwhelm the seating zone, disrupt sightlines, and cast uneven lighting that could compromise the room's overall comfort. Recognising this, the designers chose to recalibrate. “We pivoted by reworking its dimensions and adjusting the height and angle of the red cone elements to preserve its bold, flowing character while softening its physical footprint,” explains Devang. The result is a more refined, perfectly scaled installation that retains its sculptural impact while allowing the space beneath it to remain open, functional, and inviting.



The dining room pulses with bold patterns—a striped wall and statement artwork juxtaposed with traditional furniture, creating a dialogue between eras



A timeless entryway that blends Mediterranean charm with modern minimalism. Arched colonnades, lush greens, and a bold wooden door invite you into The Art House

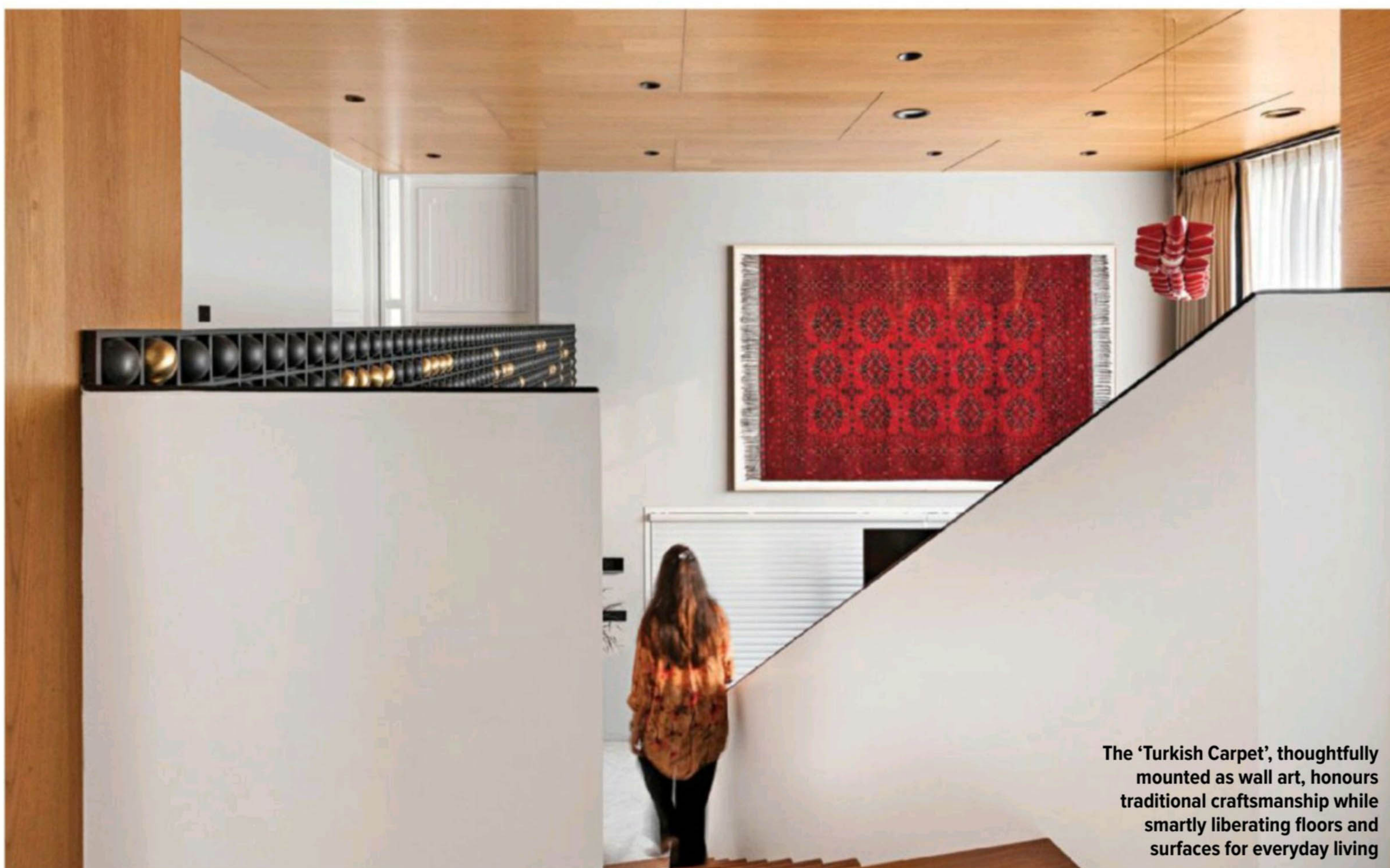
The parents' bedroom feels like a playful modernist studio, with a bold monochrome headboard and saturated artworks setting the mood



PRATIK SIDHPURA AND DEVANG PATEL

Founders & Principals, P&D Associates

The firm P&D Associates, founded by principals Pratik Sidhpura and Devang Patel in the year 2009, is based in Bharuch. They, at P&DA, strive to provide Architecture and Interior Design solutions that are bespoke with energy and contemporary cuts. Their design approach is largely involves an intense articulation of colours as mood makers. Materials and surfaces come together to create the right painting-like composition for a range of projects including corporate and residences, of various scales.



The 'Turkish Carpet', thoughtfully mounted as wall art, honours traditional craftsmanship while smartly liberating floors and surfaces for everyday living



This inviting, gazebo-style lounge is adorned with delicate white latticework, thoughtfully complemented by contemporary furniture, soft textures, and a warm, earthy colour palette

“On a broader level, we hope The Art House contributes to a shift in how we think about integrating art into homes: not as static decor but as an integral, living part of architecture.”

—DEVANG PATEL & PRATIK SIDDHPURA, *Co-Founders & Principal Designers, P&D Associate*

Nearby, ‘Nature’s Abstractions,’ a collage of black-and-white photographs and organic patterns, invites contemplation while an intricate leather jacket installation demonstrates the belief that “functional spaces don’t have to sacrifice expressive, sculptural elements.” According to Pratik, each piece was “conceptualized not just as decor, but as a narrative layer that reflects the client’s values, personal history, and emotional connection to craftsmanship and nature.”

Movement through The Art House becomes a journey of discovery, anchored by the ‘Pixel Staircase’—a balustrade that transforms the mundane act of climbing the stairs into an immersive art experience. Drawing inspiration from digital pixelation while employing warm, tactile materials like brass and wood, this element required close collaboration between designers, fabricators, and structural engineers to ensure each brass sphere was precisely positioned for both visual impact and safety. The result is a staircase that functions as both sculpture and architecture, complemented by a preserved Turkish carpet that transforms the wall into a canvas celebrating cultural heritage.

“It’s not about shock value,” says Devang. “It’s about evoking quiet responses—awe, curiosity, reflection.” That philosophy extends into the dining area, where bold stripes and antique-inspired furniture strike a subtle strain between the old and the new. In contrast, the kitchen offers visual calm through its mint-green cabinetry, brass accents, and marble textures to create a soothing retreat from the boldness of the communal zones.

As the home further unfolds, every room reveals a different facet of the family’s personality. In the master bedroom, the design language

shifts to embrace serenity without sacrificing visual interest. Case in point, the sleek leather headboard paired with brass and stone elements. However, the parents’ bedroom takes a different approach, embracing vibrancy through bold artwork and striking contrasts that create a modern art gallery-like feel. The material palette throughout the residence testifies the designers’ commitment to sustainability and craftsmanship. Wood, leather, and wool provide organic warmth, while metal, brass, and ceramics add contemporary refinement. Even unconventional materials find their place, for example, the ‘Fragmented Flow’ artwork uses sustainable cardboard to showcase craftsmanship and innovation without encroaching on practical space.

Some homes are built to be lived in. Others are designed to be admired. But The Art House manages to do both. For both Devang and Pratik, this project strengthens the idea that functional spaces don’t have to sacrifice expressive, sculptural elements; instead, they can coexist in ways that make daily rituals feel richer and more intentional. “Going forward, we see this approach inspiring us to push the boundaries of how materials, craft and technology intersect—exploring unconventional mediums, adaptive installations and interactive elements that respond to how people live and move,” concludes the duo. ✚

FACTFILE

Location: Ankleshwar, Gujarat **Area:** 4500 sq ft. **Design by:** P&D Associates

Principal Designer: Devang Patel, Pratik Siddhpura

Design Team: Krina Modi, Nishi Kansara, Meet Jain

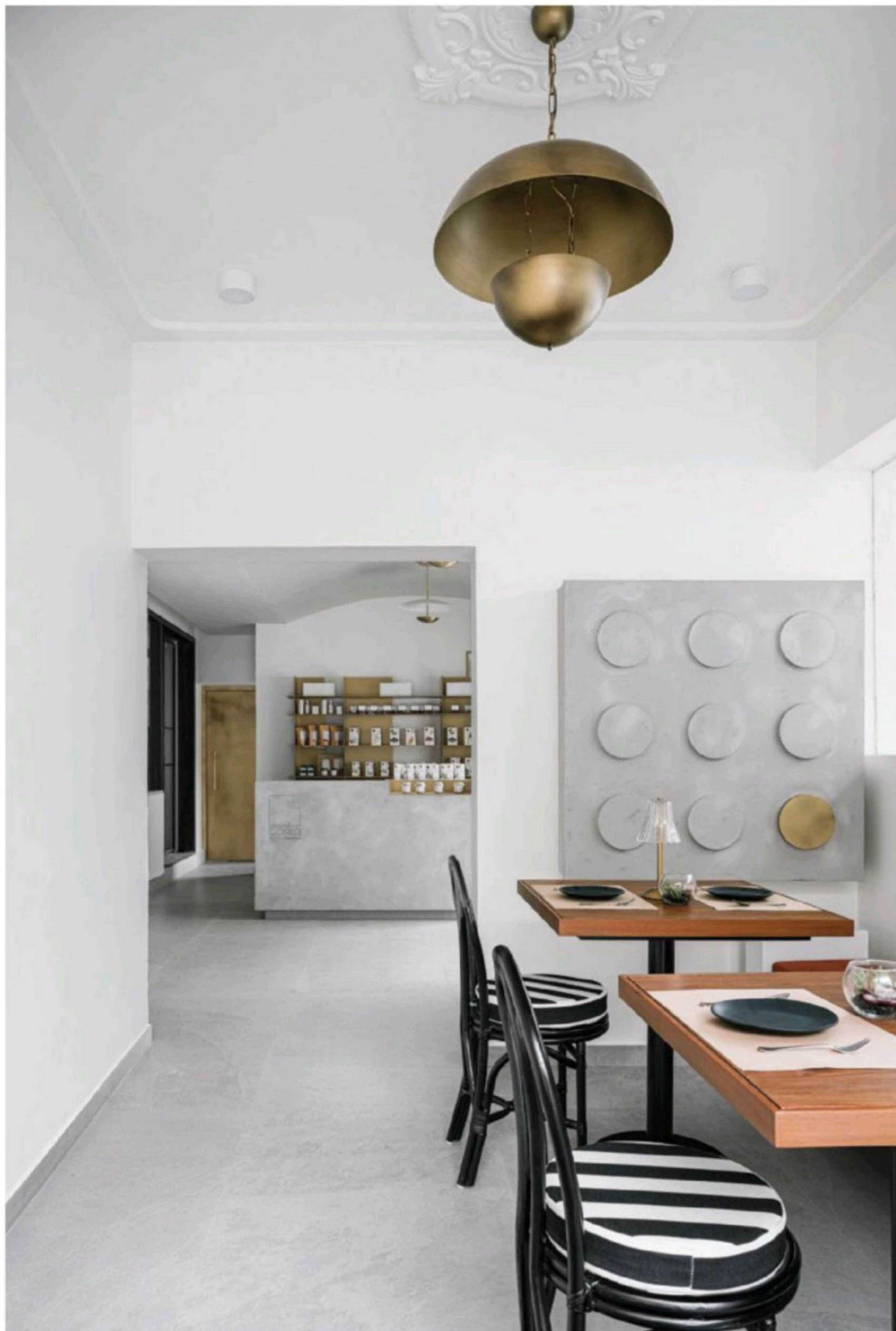
Date of Completion: September 2024

THE CHOCOLATE HOUSE

PROJECT: Toska Chocolate House, Ahmedabad; **DESIGNERS:** Studio Patternmaker; **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Ishita Sitwala

Studio Patternmaker Turns a 50-Year-Old Home into a Cocoa Retreat

Text by: Seema Sreedharan







Once a cherished family home, now a haven for chocolate lovers - a 50-year-old Ahmedabad home finds new life as Toska Chocolate House, a space where memories and indulgence intertwine. Set in the lively Bodakdev neighbourhood, the 2,000 sq. ft. space has been thoughtfully reimaged through adaptive reuse by architect Parthavi Patel of Studio Patternmaker. Rooted in the client's deep personal connection to the home, her design approach preserves its essence while introducing a contemporary yet timeless aesthetic. The result is a café and retail space that bridges legacy and reinvention, capturing the soul of Toska Artisan Chocolates in a setting that is both intimate and immersive.

Toska Artisan Chocolates takes its name from the word Toska which in Russian means longing or homesickness, and in Greek, evokes nostalgia - an inner pull or ache for a distant place or time gone by. For founder Ishan Pansuria, chocolate is a bridge to the past, inspired by moments shared with his late father. Honoring this connection, he chose to establish Toska Chocolate House within his family home, creating an environment where flavors and stories come together in a richly layered experience.

Guided by this deep-rooted connection, the transformation embraces the home's original framework, ensuring its spirit lives on in a new form. Existing architectural elements have been carefully preserved, while modern updates make the space more open and functional. The result is a one-of-a-kind chocolate house - a place



Guided by this deep-rooted connection, the transformation embraces the home's original framework, ensuring its spirit lives on in a new form. Existing architectural elements have been carefully preserved, while modern updates make the space more open and functional.



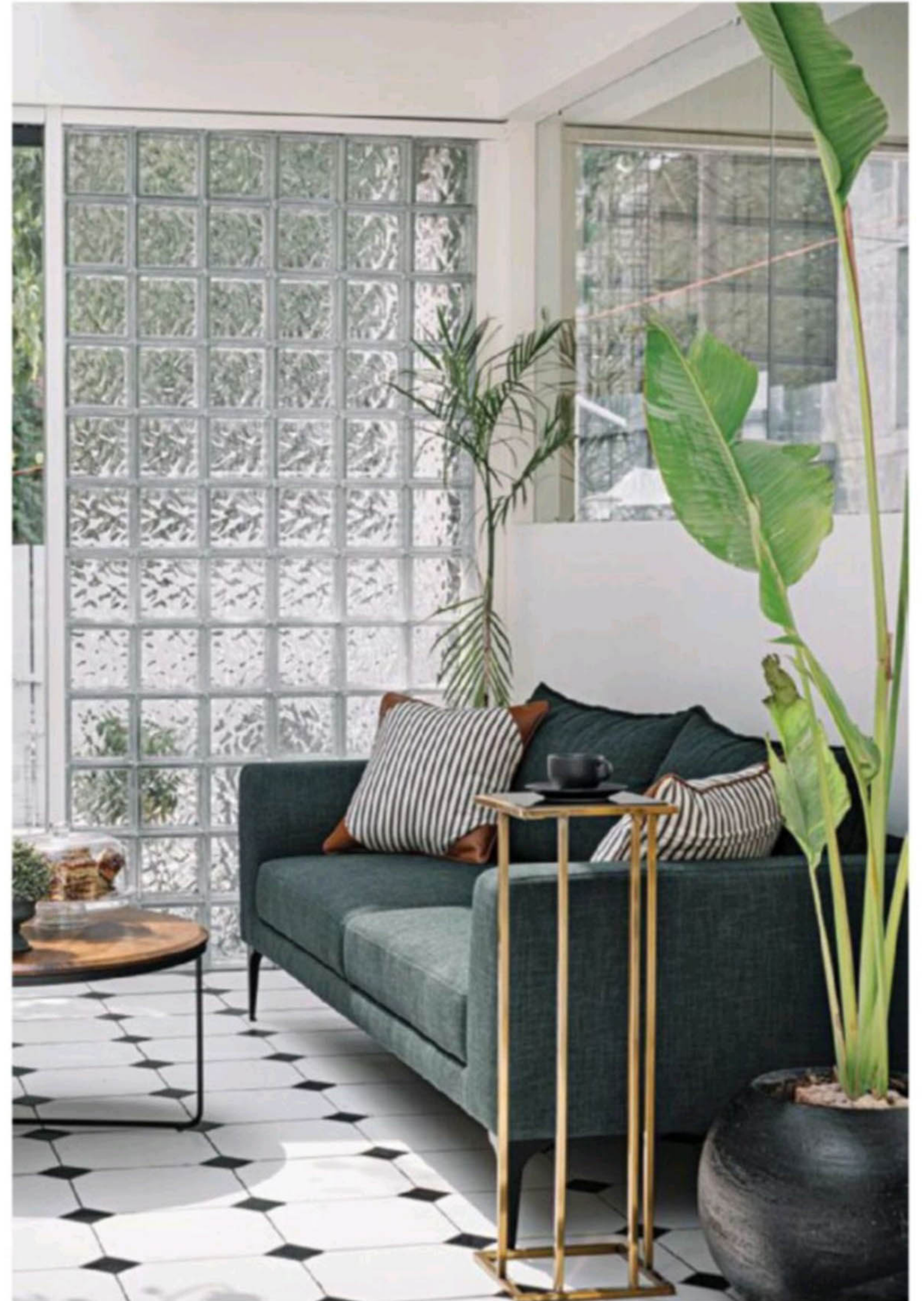
where people can not only shop for chocolate but also witness the artistry behind its making. Alongside the retail and production areas, the site also includes a cafe space that offers its visitors signature Toska chocolate blends and thoughtfully crafted in-house recipes. More than just a place to indulge, the cafe is designed as a warm retreat to gather over a hot cuppa, savour comforting bites, and experience chocolate in its many delightful forms.

To seamlessly integrate the diverse functions within the space, the interiors are thoughtfully divided into four zones: a retail section, a chocolate production and viewing area, a cafe with a private dining nook and a back-of-house kitchen. Stepping into the foyer, visitors are greeted with a subtle, monotone palette that sets the tone for the interiors - silver-white textured walls and ceiling, light grey tile

flooring, and elegant brass accents that quietly elevate the space. This restrained palette creates a neutral backdrop, allowing the true star of the space - the chocolates - to take center stage. From the foyer, tempting glimpses of the retail space and outdoor cafe spark curiosity, drawing visitors further inside to explore.

Stepping beyond the entrance, the retail area unfolds with a striking brass shelving unit at its core, offering a gleaming showcase for Toska's handcrafted chocolates. The warm, metallic tones contrast beautifully with the neatly packaged confections, subtly emphasizing the artistry behind them. A softly arched ceiling enhances the sense of volume, lending an airy openness to this space. Adjacent to the retail area, the chocolate production and viewing section allows visitors to witness the craft firsthand.





Toska Chocolate House is a testament to how design can evoke memory, emotion, and craft. With Studio Patternmaker's thoughtful intervention, the space transforms chocolate indulgence into a heartfelt journey of taste and time.

A wide glass partition offers an unobstructed view of the chocolate-making process, fostering a deeper connection between maker and consumer while highlighting the artisanal nature of Toska's offerings. Originally featuring arched elements, this section was reimagined for a more open and visually engaging experience, aligning with the design's focus on transparency and interaction.

On the other side of the retail area lies the semi-covered cafe, accessed through a sliding glass door flanked with additional display units. Channeling the charm of a Parisian bistro, the space features black-and-white vintage tile patterns, delicate cornice details, elegant brass light fixtures and ornate furniture elements. Table tops are adorned with crystal lamps that cast a warm glow, reminiscent of quaint European coffee places. Two styles of rattan chairs, black and beige are paired with striped cushions, adding a playful contrast.

Along the walls, marble and wood benches maximize seating in the narrow space. Large traveller palms, added in gold-painted pots add to the cafe's warm and inviting ambience. Previously a utility alley in the house, this area has been transformed with the addition of a glass

canopy, filtering in ample natural daylight while providing shelter from the city's extreme climate.

Tucked away towards the back, the Nostalgia Room is an intimate dining space rich with sentiment. With sophisticated walnut parquet flooring, restored black-stained doors, and a dark rafted ceiling, it exudes warmth and character. An antique chandelier casts a soft glow, highlighting artwork curated to reflect Toska's essence. A particularly touching detail is a handwritten note from the client's late father, framed in a piece he once gifted, adding a deeply personal connection to the space.

Toska Chocolate House is a testament to how design can evoke memory, emotion, and craft. With Studio Patternmaker's thoughtful intervention, the space transforms chocolate indulgence into a heartfelt journey of taste and time. Whether through the quiet nostalgia of its interiors or the immersive connection to the craft, the space invites visitors to pause, indulge, and appreciate the finer nuances of the artisanal chocolate. Here, every bite tells a story - one of heritage, passion, and the timeless magic of cocoa. ✚

Project Features



Teak tables with birch ply legs and brass edges accompany the lounge seating

THE HOME UNSAID

PROJECT: Muted Tones; **ARCHITECTS:** Jetsons

In the middle of Mumbai, a small apartment dials down the noise and gets the details spot on

Somewhere in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, wedged between noise, neon boards and the city's everyday scramble, a compact 850 sq.ft. apartment quietly holds its own. Home to a young working couple and their child, the design balances modern contemporary aesthetics with a deep reverence for Indian textures, patterns and materials. Designed by the team at Jetsons, the walls tune out the city's constant clamour, forming a comforting refuge, something to return to after a long, overfull day.

Teak is the first thing you notice. It starts at the entrance, main door, shoe cabinet, credenza and continues inside, tying one corner to the next without pulling focus. The living area picks up from there. A tiled insert on the floor, bottle green and off-white, shaped like an oval rug, outlined in brass, anchors the seating zone. It's a detail that doesn't raise its voice, but it stays with you.

The furniture sits low and easy. A generous sofa, two accent chairs and solid teak wood tables with birch plywood legs and brass edging. The wall behind the television holds a floating unit and open shelving, finished in the same teak veneer. A matte black MS pipe structure climbs up to the ceiling. There's no attempt to soften it.

The greens come in gradually, starting with the actual plants, then the wall decals with birds, leaves, a gesture towards the family's fondness for nature. The palette, too, holds back. The main flooring is textured but neutral. Nothing jumps out. Which is precisely the point.

The dining area sits just off the living room. The terrazzo table, circular, slightly off-centre, is propped up on four teak legs, each in a different size. There is no symmetry, but there is balance. A multifunctional crockery unit sits against the wall, built from teak, birch ply and fluted glass. A terrazzo ledge runs through, echoing the table without spelling it out.



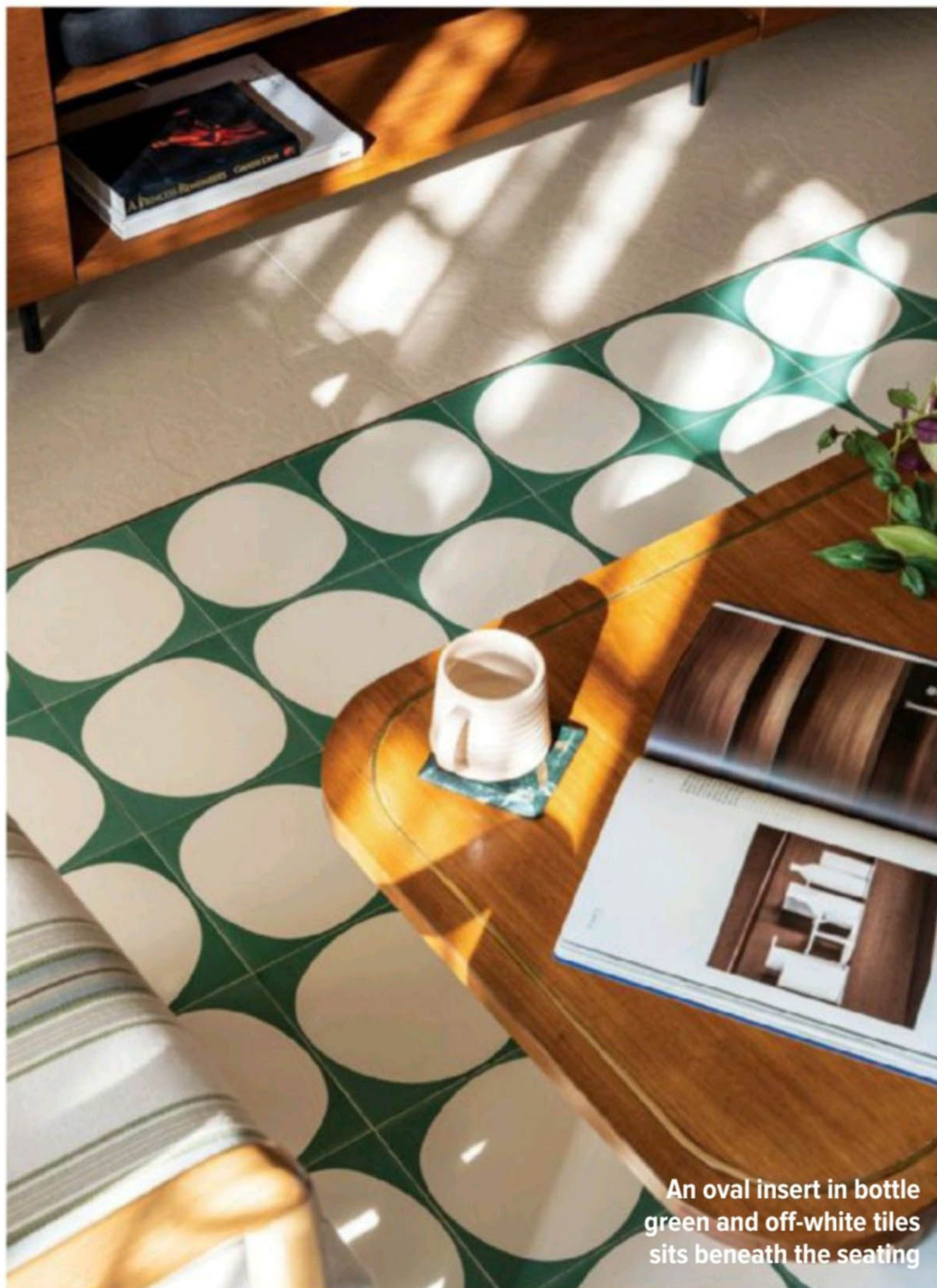
The terrazzo table, set slightly off-centre, rests on mismatched teak legs



A half-round moulding runs floor to ceiling, dotted with matte gold elephant stickers



Teak starts at the entrance and runs quietly through the home



An oval insert in bottle green and off-white tiles sits beneath the seating



Cobalt shutters, birch cabinets and a custom bunk-couch unit make up the child's room





JEET SONEJI

Founder and Principal Architect, Jetsons

Jetsons is a Bombay-based multidisciplinary practice founded by Architect Jeet Soneji. The firm aims at creating spaces which are detail oriented and make a difference in the society, irrespective of the scale of the project. Imparting meaning to everything they build is the key, while focusing on creating spaces that are concept driven. Each product, be it a house or a piece of furniture, has its own individual identity and character that reflects in its make.



Plants and nature-inspired decals bring green into the space

No false notes, no sudden turns, just a throughline of choices that hold together, some intuitive, some technical, none overplayed. In the blur of Mumbai's rush and volume, it offers a pause. One that's rare. And needed.

The kitchen, compact and clean-lined, moves in a muted green register. Lower cabinetry in leaf green laminate, uppers in a pale wood finish. The countertop, a terrazzo slab with green chips on a white base, connects to the soft sage kit-kat backsplash. The layout stays tight. The palette stays calm.

In the child's bedroom, the colours shift but stay measured. Cobalt blue shutters. Birch plywood cabinets. Chevron wooden flooring to stretch the visual length. A custom-built piece, part bunk bed, part couch, takes up one wall. On the other side, a study table, shelves, and a full-size bulletin board. Monkey bars near the window let the child climb, hang and swing.

The common bathroom is pared back. Grey terrazzo tiles on the floor and walls, matte black fixtures, a fluted glass shower partition. The scale is modest, but the materials hold their ground.

In the master bedroom, the detailing gets quieter still. The flooring splits into two tones, off-white across the room, mushroom grey around the bed, divided by a single brass line. The bed, side tables, dresser and wardrobes are finished in teak veneer. Brass

handles on the wardrobes. The headboard, stitched in soft bands of peach, olive and grey, plays against the floral butta curtains on a beige base. There is one wall detail: a half-round moulding, painted the same colour as the wall, running vertically from floor to ceiling and punctuated with matte gold elephant stickers. The primary bathroom uses material to mark its zones. Dark grey terrazzo below the sill. Wood-look tiles above. That's all.

There is nothing performative about this home. No false notes, no sudden turns, just a throughline of choices that hold together, some intuitive, some technical, none overplayed. In the blur of Mumbai's rush and volume, it offers a pause. One that's rare. And needed. ✚

FACTFILE

Typology: Residential **Project:** Muted Tones **Location:** Mumbai

Firm: Jetsons **Size:** 850 sq. ft.

Team: Hinal Mehta, Bharat Raj Inani, Vidhi Vadodaria, Jeet Soneji

Decor: Kalakaari Haath, Mass Interiors, Divinaire Creations, Sanchi Ceramics

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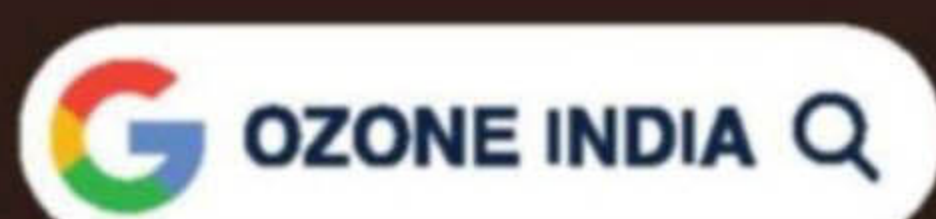
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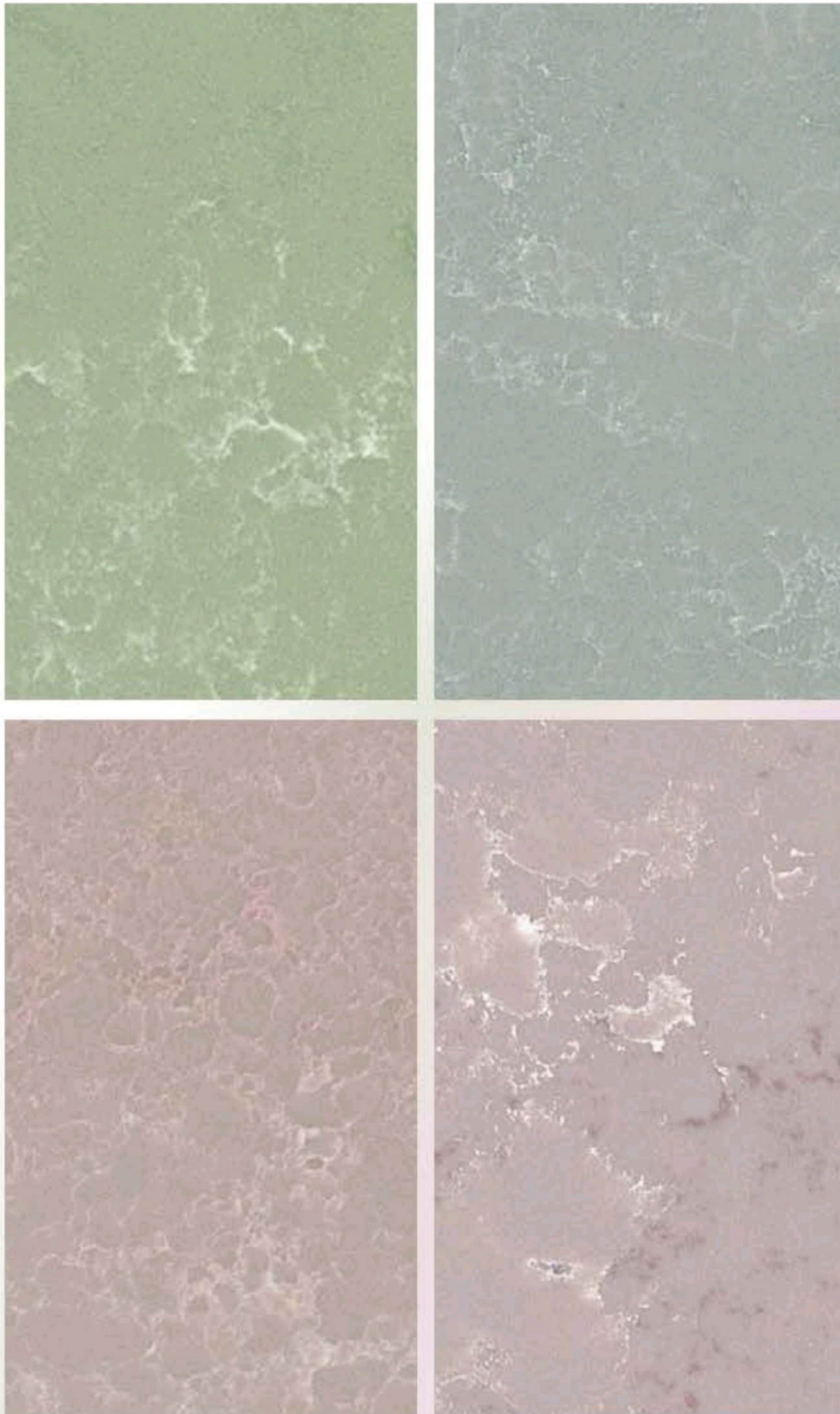


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